

# VYĀDHA GĪTĀ

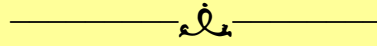
## The Butcher's Gita

Mahābhārata Vana Parva Adhyāya 210



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## DHARMA-VYĀDHA GĪTĀ

### The Song of the Butcher

#### INTRODUCTION.

The principle teacher in this story is the butcher Dharma-vyādhā who is mentioned and lauded by Pillai-lokācharya in his work Srivachanabhushana as an exemplar of Dharma. But to my knowledge none of the Srivaishnava acharyas have actually shone any light on this character or on his Dharma teachings. I have tried to address this deficit by translating and producing this work. I have also enanced it with appropriate supportive quotes from the Bhagavad Gita.

This discourse is preceeded by a story. The learned brahmin Kaushika was sitting under a tree one day chanting the Vedas. A female crane sitting on a branch above shat on him. The brahmin became infuriated and flung an angry glance at her upon which she fell unconscious from the tree, hit the ground and died. The brahmin was filled with remorse for having been instumental in her death and after consolling himself and cleaning up, he went to the nearby village on a begging round. He arrived at a certain house and the housewife told him to wait at the gate while she prepared the alms for him. In the meantime her husband arrived home, exhausted and hungry. She immediately set about attending to him - bring him water to wash up and then lovingly serving him his lunch while she fanned him. After some time she noticed the Brahmin still standing at the gate waiting.



She finished serving her husband and then returned to give alms to the Brahmin Kkaushika who was extremely irritated at being made to wait so long. He chastised her for her neglect of a learned Brahmin, whereupon she said to him:— "I am not the crane that you killed with your angry glances — they cannot affect me!" Astonished he asked her how she knew about that incident, she said that she'd gained clairvoyance simply from serving her husband with wrapt devotion. She then delivered a long lecture to him about the qualities of a true Brahmin and finished off by telling him that since he was so deficient in knowledge of Dharma and indeed it's application he would do well to pay a visit to Dharma-vyādhā the butcher of Mithila and learn Dharma from him.

॥ śrīḥ ॥  
adhyāyaḥ 1



mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

cintayitvā tadāścaryaṁ striyā proktam aśeṣataḥ |  
vinindansa dvijo"tmānam āgaskṛta ivābabhau || 1 ||

Markandeya said, "Continually reflecting upon that wonderful discourse of the housewife, Kaushika began to reproach himself [for his arrogance] and was consumed with remorse.

cintayānaḥ sa dharmasya sūkṣmāṁ gatimathābravīt |  
śraddadhānena vai bhāvye gacchāmi mithilāmaham || 2 ||

Contemplating on the subtle ways of Dharma, he said to himself, 'I should accept with reverence what the lady has said and should therefore, travel to Mithila.

kṛtātmā dharmavittasyāṁ vyādho nivasate kila |  
taṁ gacchāmyahamadyaiva dharmāṁ praṣṭuṁ tapodhanam || 3 ||

Without a doubt I'll find in that city a butcher, self-controlled and fully acquainted with the mysteries of Dharma.

tato jagāma mithilāṁ janakena surakṣitām |  
dharma setu samākīrṇāṁ yajñotsavavatīm śubhām || 4 ||

He travelled to Mithila, the capital of King Janaka and he beheld the city pervaded by the evidence of Dharma. A beautiful town resounding with the joyous sounds of ceremonies and festivities.

dharmavyādham apr̥cchaccha sa cāśya kathito dvijaiḥ |  
apaśyattatragatvā taṁ sūnāmadhye vyavasthitam || 5 ||  
mārga māhipa māṁsāni vikrīṇantaṁ tapasvinam |  
ākulatvācca kreṭṇām ekānte saṁsthito dvijaḥ || 6 ||

Arriving there, the Brahmin enquired about the virtuous butcher and was given directions by some twice-born persons. Arriving to the place indicated by them, the Brahmin Kaushika beheld the butcher seated in a butcher's yard and selling venison and buffalo meat and surrounded by a large throng of buyers, he stood at a distance and waited.

sa tu jñātā dvijaṁ prāptaṁ sahasā sambhramotthitaḥ |  
ājagāma yato vipraḥ sthita ekāntāsane || 7 ||

But the butcher, apprehending that the Brahmin had come to see him, suddenly rose from his seat and went to that secluded spot where he was standing.

vyādha uvāca

abhivādaye tvāṁ bhagavan svāgataṁ te dvijottama |  
aham vyādho hi bhadraṁ te kiṁ karomi praśādhi mām || 8 ||

The butcher said:– "I humbly salute you, O venerable one! Welcome, I am the butcher. May you be well! Please instruct me as to what I may do for you.

ekapatnyā yaduktosi gaccha tvaṁ mithilāmiti |  
jānāmy etad ahaṁ sarvaṁ yad arthaṁ tvam ihāgataḥ || 9 ||

The chaste housewife has advised you to come to visit me. I know all of this and I also know for what purpose you have come."

śrutvā ca tasya tad vākyaṁ sa vipro bhr̥ṣavismitaḥ |  
dviṭīyam idam āścaryam ityacintayata dvijaḥ || 10 ||

Hearing these words that Brahmin was filled with surprise. And he began to reflect inwardly, thinking, "This indeed, is the second marvel that I see!"

adeśasthaṁ hi te stānam iti vyādho'bravīd dvijam |  
gṛhaṁ gaccāva bhagavan yadi te rocate'nagha || 11 ||

The butcher then said to the Brahmin:– "you are now standing in place that is scarcely proper for you, O sinless one. If it pleases you, let us go to my house."

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

bāḍham ityeva taṁ vipro hr̥ṣṭo vacanam abravīt |  
agra tastu dvijaṁ kṛtvā sa jagāma gṛhaṁ prati || 12 ||

Markandeya continued:– "So be it," said the Brahmin gladly. And thereupon, the butcher proceeded towards his home with the Brahmin walking before him<sup>1</sup>.

praviśya ca gṛhaṁ ramyam āsanenābhi pūjitaḥ |  
arghyeṇa ca sa vai tena vyādhena dvijasattamaḥ' || 13 ||

And entering his abode, that looked delightful, the butcher honoured his guest by offering him a seat and water to wash his hands.

pādyamāchamanīyaṁ ca pratigrhya dvijottamaḥ |  
tataḥ sukhopaviṣṭaṁ vyādhaṁ vacanam abravīt || 14 ||

And he also gave him water to wash his feet and face.<sup>2</sup> And accepting these, that best of Brahmins sat at his ease and conversed with the butcher.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

karmaitadvai na sadṛśaṁ bhavataḥ pratibhāti me |  
anutapye bhr̥śaṁ tāta tava ghoreṇa karmaṇā || 15 ||

The Brahmin said:– "I really don't think that this profession is suitable for you. O butcher! I deeply regret that you should follow such a cruel trade."

vyādha uvāca

kulocitam idaṁ karma piṭṛ pairtāmahaṁ param |  
vartamānasya me dharme sve manyuṁ mā kṛthā dvija || 16 ||

"This is my hereditary profession, I have inherited it from my father and grandfather. O priest, don't concern yourself about me adhering to the duties that belong to me by birth.

vidhātrā vihitāṁ pūrvam karma svam anupālayan |  
prayatnāccha gurū vṛddhau śuśrūṣe'haṁ dvijottama || 17 ||

Discharging the duties ordained for me beforehand by Brahma, I carefully serve my gurus and the senior citizens.

satyaṁ vade nābhyasūye yathāśakti dadāmi ca |  
devatātithi bhr̥tyānām avaśiṣṭena vartaye || 18 ||

<sup>1</sup> It is Hindu etiquette for the superior person to walk in front.

<sup>2</sup> It is also etiquette to offer water for drinking – but Brahmins would not accept water from the hands of a low-caste butcher.

O best of Brahmins! I always speak the truth, and never envy others; and I give charity to the best of my ability. I live upon what remains after serving the gods, strangers<sup>3</sup>, and the employees that depend on me.

na kutsayāmyaham kiñcin na garhe balavattaram |  
kṛtam anveti kartāraṁ purā karma dvijottama || 19 ||

I never speak ill of anything, small or great. O Brahmin, the actions (karma) of a former life always follow the doer.

kṛṣi-gorakṣya-vāṇijyam-iha lokasya jīvanam |  
daṇḍanītis-trayo vidyā tena loko bhavatyuta || 20 ||

Agriculture, rearing of cattle, trade, politics and the study and teaching of the Vedas (*trai-vidya*) are the principle means of material existence in the world.

karma śūdre kṛṣir vaiśye saṁgrāmaḥ kṣatriye smṛtaḥ |  
brahmacarya tapo mantrāḥ satyaṁ ca brāhmaṇe sadā || 21 ||

Service has been ordained to be the vocation of the Sudra. Agriculture for the Vaishyas, and defence for the Kshatriyas, while the practice of the *Brahmacharya* vow<sup>4</sup>, asceticism, recitation of mantras and truthfulness have been ordained for the Brahmins.

rājā praśāsti dharmeṇa svakarma niratāḥ prajāḥ |  
vikarmāṇaśca ye kecit tān yunakti svakarmasu || 22 ||

The king should rule justly over subjects adhering to their proper duties; while he should rectify those that have neglected their bounded duties.

bhetavyaṁ hi sadā rājñāṁ prajānām adhipā hite |  
mārayanti vikarmasthaṁ lubdhā mṛgamiveśubhiḥ || 23 ||

Rulers should always be feared, because they are the lords of their subjects. They restrain those subjects of theirs that neglect their obligations just as they restrain the motions of the deer by means of their arrows.

rājāno hi svadharmeṇa śriyam icchanti bhūyasīm |  
sarveśāṁ eva varṇānām trātā rājā bhavatyuta || 24 ||

Politicians dedicated to their profession should work hard to maximise the economy of the country through the protection and nurturing all the orders of society.

pareṇa hi hatān brahman varāha mahiśānaham |  
na svayaṁ hanmi viprarṣe vikrīṇāmi sadā tvaham || 25 ||

As regards myself, I never harm any living being but I do sell pork and buffalo meat. I sell meat of animals that have been slaughtered by others.

na bhakṣayāmi māṁsāni ṛtugāmī tathāhyaham |  
sadopavāsī ca tathā naktabhojī sadā dvija || 26 ||

I never eat meat myself; and have sex with my wife only in the appropriate season; I always fast during the day, and eat, O priest, in the night.

### Commentary

According to the Sacred Law only women have conjugal rights known as the *Ritu*. The

<sup>3</sup> *Atithi* — refers to someone, a guest, who arrives at one's home without being invited.

<sup>4</sup> *Brahmacharya* is a vow of studentship — *Brahma* = the divine, *charya* = moving in.

Ritu which means “season” are the 12 nights after the commencement of the menstrual cycle, excluding the first 3 or 4. It is laid down in many sacred texts that it is the duty of the husband to have sex with his wife during this period. This is known as *Ritu-gamana*. After the menstrual blood has ceased to flow, the woman is advised to purify herself by bathing and wearing clean clothes, she should approach her husband and say:— *ṛtum dehi* – "give me my conjugal rights" — the husband has no right to refuse such a request. (Mbh 13:162.41). In fact a refusal to oblige is considered a heinous sin leading to hell. (Parasara 4:12). It is also taught that having sex in the Ritu is one of the virtues that lead to heaven. (Mbh. 8:144.13-14) The Sacred Law goes even further and declares that the married couple who only have sex during the Ritu are to be considered as celibate (*brahmacaris*). (Mbh. 12:221.11)

aśīlaścāpi puruṣo bhūtvā bhavati śīlavān |  
prāṇi-himsāraśīcāpi bhavate dhārmikaḥ punaḥ || 27 ||

Even though the vocation one pursues may lack virtue, yet the practitioner may be unimpeachable. So even a butcher who slaughters animals for a living may be an exemplary person.

### Commentary

People should not be judged by their profession but the quality of their character. There are many examples in Hindu literature of prostitutes that were elevated characters. Pingala of Videha in Bhagavatam and Kanakamba a courtesan who was a disciple of Ramanuja.

yecaiva mām praśaṁsanti yeca nindanti mānavāḥ |  
sarvān supariṇītena karmāṇā toṣayāmyaham || 28 ||

Regarding myself, I always seek to please with acts of kindness, those that praise me, as also those that speak ill of me.

śaktyā'nnadānaṁ satataṁ titikṣā dharma nityatā |  
yathārhaṁ pratipūjā ca sarvabhūteṣu vai dayā || 29 ||  
tyāgān nānyatra martyānāṁ guṇās tiṣṭhānti pūruṣe |

Giving food to the best of one's ability to the hungry, endurance of heat and cold and the other pairs of opposites, steadiness in the practice of Dharma, giving respect and honour to the deserving and compassion for all creatures — these attributes can never be found in a person without an innate desire for renouncing the world.

mṛṣāvādān parihaṛet kuryāt priyam ayācetaḥ |  
na ca kāmān na saṁrambhān na dveṣād dharmam utsṛjet || 30 ||

One should avoid falsehood in speech, and should do good without being urged to. One should never abandon Dharma from lust, from anger, or from malice.

priye nātibhṛṣaṁ hr̥ṣyed apriye na ca saṁjvaret |  
na muhyed arthakṛcchreṣu na ca dharmān parityajet || 31 ||

On obtaining an object of desire one should not be elated, nor grieve immoderately at a loss. One should never feel depressed when financially challenged, and never abandon the path of Dharma.

karma cet kiñcid anyat syād itaran na tad ācāret || 32 ||  
yat kalyāṇam abhidhyāyet tatrātmānaṁ niyojayet |

If at any time one does what is wrong in error, it should never be repeated. One should always strive mentally to do that which is beneficial to oneself.

na pāpaṃ prati pāpaḥ syāt sādhuḥ eva sadā bhavet |  
ātmanaiva hataḥ pāpo yaḥ pāpaṃ kartum icchati || 33 ||

One should never seek revenge, but should always deal honestly others [friends or foes]. That wretched individual who desires to do what is dishonest, commits spiritual suicide.

karma caitad asādhūnām vṛjīnām asādhukam  
na dharmostīti manvānāḥ śucīnava hasanti ye || 34 ||  
aśraddadhānā dharmas te naśyanti na saṁśayaḥ |  
mahādr̥tīrivādhmātaḥ pāpo bhavati nityadā || 35 ||

Those malicious people who wilfully harm others, disregarding ethical principles, mock the good and the pure saying:– 'There is no Dharma' - undoubtedly they meet with destruction through their unethical behaviour. They are like a blacksmith's bellows – inflated with arrogance but empty of substance.

sādhuh sannatimān eva sarvatra dvijasattama |  
mūḍhānām avaliptānām asāraṁ bhāṣitaṁ bhavet |  
darśayanty-antarātmānaṁ divā rūpaṁ ivāṁśumān || 36 ||

Noble-born people are always polite and considerate. The unscrupulous are filled with pride and folly and their speech lacks substance. It is their inner self that reveals their true nature like the sun that reveals forms during the day.

na loke rājate mūrkhāḥ kevalātmapraśaṁsayā |  
apiceha mṛjāhīnaḥ kṛta vidyaḥ prakāśate || 37 ||

The fool cannot excel in the world by means of self-praise. The wise, however, even if they be destitute of physical attributes, display their radiance by refraining from speaking ill of others and well of themselves.

abruvan kasyacin nindāmātma pūjām avarṇayan |  
na kaścid guṇasaṁpannaḥ prakāśo bhuvi dṛśyate || 38 ||

No example, however, can be met with, in this world, of a person achieving excellence by demeaning others while self-promoting.

vikarmaṇā tapyamānaḥ pāpād viparimucyate |  
na tat kuryām punar iti dvitīyāt parimucyate || 39 ||

If one regrets a wrong done, that feeling of remorse effaces the guilt. The firm resolution of never doing it again saves one from future accountability.

karmaṇā yena teneha pāpāt dvijasattama |  
evaṁ śrutir iyaṁ brahman dharmeṣu pratidṛśyate || 40 ||

One may also compensate for bad Karma by performing any of those expiations ordained in the scriptures without attachment or craving for selfish outcomes.

### Commentary

The Dharma Śāstras give numerous methods of expiating bad Karma - through going on arduous pilgrimages, performing charity, social service, reciting specific mantra, undertaking a program of austerities of some sort like fasting and self-deprivation, and the performing rituals like kuṣmāṇḍa homa, Brahmakūrca homa etc.

pāpani buddhveha purā kṛtāni sva-dharma-śīlo'pi vihanti paścāt |  
dharmo brahman nudate puruṣāṇām yat kurvate pāpam iha pramādāt || 41 ||

A noble person who commits an offence through error can then expatiate that misdeed through compensatory good works. Dharma itself will exculpate those transgressions that one may occasionally commit through ignorance or neglect.

#### Commentary

It is not possible for one to remain vigilant 24/7 and everyone no matter how noble and committed to Dharma at some time or other lapses and makes error. But the accumulation of merit that one has achieved through sustained practice (Dharma) will negate those minor acts of impropriety.

pāpaṁ kṛtvā hi manyeta nāhamasmīti pūruṣaḥ |  
taṁ tu devāḥ prapaśyanti svasyaivāntarapūruṣaḥ || 42 ||

If a person commits sin thinking that he is not accountable and will not be discovered is wrong! The gods behold everyone and everything that one does, also the Supreme Being (*antaryāmi*) that is within every one's heart is also the silent witness.

cikīrśed eva kalyāṇaṁ śraddadhāno'nasūyakaḥ |  
vasanasyeva chidrāṇi sādḥūnām vivṛṇoti yaḥ |  
apaśyannātmano doṣān sa pāpaḥ pretya naśyati || 43 ||

A serious spiritual aspirant stops taking note of the faults of others and desires only the wellbeing of all creatures. The wicked who turn their attention away from their own faults and focus on those of others are like people having rips in their garment. [The tears keep on getting bigger until eventually the person is naked]. Those who refuse to acknowledge their own faults can never achieve happiness either in this life or the next!

pāpaṁ cet puruṣaḥ kṛtvā kalyāṇam abhipadyate |  
mucyate sarva pāpebhyo mahābhreṇeva candramāḥ || 44 ||

If a person performs compensatory good deeds after committing a sin, without doubt he is purified and resplendent like the moon emerging from thick clouds.

#### Commentary

Sin or pāpa is defined as any act which causes suffering to another being and virtue or puṇya is that which contributes to the benefit and wellbeing of others.

*paropakāra puṇyāya pāpāya parapīḍanam*

yathā'dityaḥ samudyan vai tamaḥ sarvaṁ vyapohati |  
evaṁ kalyāṇam ātiṣṭhan sarva pāpaiḥ pramucyate || 45 ||

Just as the rising sun, dispels all darkness of the night. So, O best of Brahmins, good works done without selfish motives liberate one from all negative karma.

*yoga-saṁnyasta karmāṇaṁ jñāna saṁcchinna saṁśayam |  
ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya || 41 ||*

O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), actions do not bind one who has renounce them through Karma Yoga and whose doubts are dispelled by knowledge, and who therefore possesses a steady mind. Gita 4:41)



pāpānām viddhyadhiṣṭhānam lobhamohau dvijottama |  
lubadhāḥ pāpaṁ vyavasyanti narā nātibahuśrutāḥ || 46 ||

O best of Brahmins greed (*lobha*) is said to be the repository of all sins, the greedy person who has not listened to the sound teachings of the scriptures will engage in malfeasance [to satisfy their greed].

adharmā dharma-rūpeṇa ṛṇaiḥ kūpā ivāvṛtāḥ |  
yeṣāṁ damaḥ pavitrāṇi pralāpā dharma-saṁśritaḥ |  
sarvaṁ hi vidyate teṣu śiṣṭācāraḥ sudurlabhaḥ || 47 ||

Villainous people generally cover themselves with a thin virtuous exterior, like wells which are camouflaged by long grass. Outwardly they seem to possess self-control and uprightness and indulge in giving lectures on virtue. Indeed, they appear to possess all good qualities but true sincerity is lacking.

## || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 2



mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

sa tu vipram athovāca dharmavyādho yudhiṣṭhira |  
yad ahaṁ hy ācare karma ghoram etad asaṁśayam || 1 ||

Markandeya continued:— The pious butcher, O Yudhishtira, then said to that Brahmin, "Undoubtedly the work I do is horrid, O Brahmin.

vidhis tu balavān brahman dustaraṁ hi purā-kṛtam |  
purākṛtasya pāpasya karma doṣo bhavaty ayam || 2 ||

Destiny is all-powerful and it is difficult to evade the consequence of our past actions. And this is due to the Karma arising out of actions committed in a former life.

doṣasyaitasya vai brahman vighāte yatnavān aham |  
vidhinā vihite pūrvaṁ nimittaṁ ghātako bhavet || 3 ||

But, I am always assiduous in mitigating any harm to others. The Deity is in fact the one that takes away life, the executioner acts only as a intermediary agent.

### Commentary

The example given alludes to a court of justice where a criminal is sentenced to death by the judge. The executioner is performing a duty and has a diminished moral accountability. The judge is the one who is actually the cause of death. Likewise Lord Yama determines when people will die according to their karmas, the actual cause of death is only incidental.

nimittabhūtā hi vayaṁ karmaṇo 'sya dvijottama |  
yeṣāṁ hatānām māṁsāni vikrīṇāmo vayaṁ dvija || 4 ||  
teṣāṁ api bhaved dharma upabhogena bhakṣaṇāt |  
devatātithibhrtyānām pitṛiṇām pratipūjanāt || 5 ||

And we, O good Brahmin, are only such agents in regard to karma. Those animals that are slaughtered and whose meat I sell, also acquire indirect good karma, because (with their meat), gods and guests and servants are satiated and the manes are propitiated.

### Commentary

*kratau śrāddhe niyukto vā anaśnan patati dvijaḥ |  
mṛgyopārjitaṁ māṁsam abhyarcya pitṛdevatāḥ ||  
kṣatriyo dvādaśonaṁ tata kr̥tvā vaiśyo'pi dharmataḥ |  
dvijo jagdhvā vṛthā māṁsam abhyarcya pitṛdevatāḥ ||*

A Brahmin involved in the celebration of a yajña [in which animals are slaughtered]] becomes degraded by not taking meat (as *prasādam*). A Kshatriya should eat the cooked flesh of a quarry after having offered it to the gods and pitris. A Vaishya can take meat lawfully having bought it, after offering it to the pitris and devatas. (Vyāsa Smṛiti 3:57)

*ośadhyo vīrudhaś cāpi paśavo mṛga-pakṣiṇaḥ |  
annādya bhūtā lokasya ity api śrūyate śrutiḥ || 6 ||*

It is said authoritatively by the Shastras that herbs and vegetables, deer, birds and wild animals constitute the food of all creatures.

*ātma māṁsa pradānena śibir auśīnaro nṛpaḥ |  
svargaṁ sudurlabhaṁ prāptaḥ kṣamāvān dvijasattama || 7 ||*

And king Sibi, the son of Usinara, of great forbearance attained heaven which is hard to reach, by giving away his own flesh.

### Commentary

Indra and Agni took the forms of a hawk and a dove to test the virtue of King Sibi. The dove pursued by the hawk took refuge on the lap of the king. The hawk requested the dove be returned to him as his legitimate food. The king refused and offered to give his own flesh in exchange for that of the dove. He weighed his own flesh against the weight of the dove and no matter how much he cut off the dove was still heavier. He eventually climbed onto the scale himself. The devas were delighted and blessed him.

*rājño mahānase pūrvam rantidevasya vai dvija |  
dve sahasre tu vadhyete paśūnām anvaham tadā || 8 ||  
samāmsam dadato hy annam rantidevasya nityaśaḥ |  
atulā kīrtir abhavan nṛpasya dvijasattama || 9 ||*

And in days of yore, O Brahmin, two thousand animals used to be killed every day in the kitchen of king Rantideva; and he acquired unrivalled reputation by distributing food with meat every day.

### Commentary

In the Mahabharata and the Puranas, it is mentioned that Rantideva was a pious and benevolent king of the lunar race. He once fasted for forty-eight days and was tested by Trinity. The Trimūrti came in the disguise of a Brahmin, a Sudra, and finally as a Chandala. Each of the gods begged portions of the food that the king was using to break his fast. Finally they left him without even water to drink. Because he tolerated all this, he received the blessings of the Supreme Lord.

Rantideva possessed enormous wealth. He was very religious, and charitable and profuse in his sacrifices. He had about two hundred thousand cooks to prepare food for the beggars and poor people. Rantideva had two thousand head of cattle slaughtered daily for use in his kitchen, and fed innumerable beggars daily with food.

*cāturnāsyēṣu paśavo vadhyanta iti nityaśaḥ |  
agnayo māṁsa-kāmāś ca ity api śrūyate śrutiḥ || 10 ||*

For the performance of the four-monthly rites animals ought to be sacrificed daily. 'The sacred fire is fond of animal food,' — this saying has been handed down to us.

yajñeṣu paśavo brahman vadhyante satataṁ dvijaiḥ |  
saṁskṛtāḥ kila mantraiś ca te 'pi svargam avāpnuvan || 11 ||

And at the Vedic sacrifices, animals are invariably killed by Brahmins, and these animals being purged by incantation of mantras, go to heaven.

### Commentary

Rāmānuja's commentary on Brahma Sūtra-25-*asuddham iti cet na śabdāt*- 3-1-25

Regarding the animal killed in yajña the śruti says:— '*hiranya-śarīra ūrdhvah svargalokam eti*, — "attaining a golden body it (the animal) goes to heaven". Because it releases the jīva from body of a lower species and makes it ascend to heaven it is beneficial and not *himsa*. That action which secures an exalted status even if it involves a little pain it is definitely considered beneficial.

The mantra which is pronounced while sacrificing the animal also declares

*"na vā u etan mriyase na ripyasi devān ideṣi patibhiḥ sugobhiḥ; yatra santi sukrto nāpi duṣkṛtaḥ,*

"You do not die; you go to the gods on easy paths; where the virtuous go, not evil-doers."

Just as a treatment for an injury, even if involves a little pain does a lot of good so too the animal sacrifice in yajñas benefit the jīva that inhabits the body of the animal.

atrāpi vidhir uktaś ca munibhir māmśa-bhakṣaṇe |  
devatānām pitṛnām ca bhuṅkte dattvā tu yaḥ sadā |  
yathā vidhi yathā śraddhaṁ na sa duṣyati bhakṣaṇāt || 12 ||

And in this matter of animal food, this rule has been laid down by *Munis*:— Whoever partakes of animal food after having first offered it duly and respectfully to the gods and the *manes*, is not polluted by the act.

### Commentary

Manu 5:40 - 43. Herbs, trees, cattle, birds, and (other) animals that have been destroyed for sacrifices, receive (being reborn) higher existences. On offering the honey-mixture — *madhu-parka* (to a guest), at a sacrifice and at the rites in honour of the Ancestors, but on these occasions only, may an animal be slain; that (rule) Manu has proclaimed. A twice-born man who, knowing the true meaning of the Veda, slays an animal for these purposes, causes both himself and the animal to enter a most blessed state. A twice-born man of virtuous disposition, whether he dwells in (his own) house, with a teacher, or in the forest, must never, even in times of distress, cause an injury (to any creature) which is not sanctioned by the Veda.

amāṁsāśī bhavaty evam ity api śrūyate śrutiḥ |  
bhāryām gacchan brahmacārī ṛtau bhavati brāhmaṇaḥ |  
satyānṛte viniścitya atrāpi vidhir ucyate || 13 ||

And such a man is not at all considered to have partaken of animal food, even, as a Brahmacharin having intercoursed with his wife during the post-menstrual period, is nevertheless considered to be a good Brahmin. After consideration of the propriety and impropriety of the matter, this rule has been laid down.

saudāsena purā rājñā mānuṣā bhakṣitā dvija |  
śāpābhībhūtena bhṛśam atra kiṁ pratibhāti te |  
svadharma iti kṛtvā tu na tyajāmi dvijottama || 14 ||

King Saudasa, when under a curse, often used to eat humans<sup>5</sup>; what is your opinion of this matter? And knowing this to be my *svadharma* due to the consequence of my previous Karma, I will never leave this job.

purā kṛtam iti jñātvā jīvāmy etena karmaṇā |  
svakarma tyajato brahmann adharma iha dṛśyate |  
svakarma nirato yas tu sa dharma iti niścayaḥ || 15 ||

I obtain my livelihood from this profession. The forsaking of one's hereditary occupation is considered to be a misdemeanour, and the act of sticking to one's own profession is without doubt a meritorious act.

pūrvam hi vihitam karma dehinaṁ na vimuñcati |  
dhātrā vidhir ayaṁ dṛṣṭo bahudhā karma nirṇaye || 16 ||

The *Karma* of a former existence never leaves any one. And in determining the multiple ways in which *Karma* operates, this was not lost sight of by the Brahma.

draṣṭavyam tu bhavet prājña krūre karmaṇi vartatā |  
katham karma śubham kuryām katham mucye parābhavāt || 17 ||

A person who is operating under the influence of negative *Karma*, must always consider how that negativity can be counteracted and how one can escape from a detrimental situation.

karmaṇas tasya ghorasya bahudhā nirṇayo bhavet |  
dāne ca satyavākya ca guruśuśrūṣaṇe tathā || 18 ||  
dvijāti pūjane cāham dharme ca nirataḥ sadā |  
ativādātīmānābhyām nivṛtto 'smi dvijottama || 19 ||

Reflecting on this again and again, one will eventually discover a method of release. Accordingly, O good priest, I am charitable, truthful, assiduous in attending on my gurus, full of respect towards Brahmins, devoted to Dharma and free from arrogance and (idle) excessive talk.

kṛṣiṁ sādhu iti manyante tatra himsā parā smṛtā |  
karṣanto lāṅgalaiḥ puṁso ghnanti bhūmiśayān bahūn |  
jīvān anyāms ca bahuśas tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 20 ||

Agriculture is considered to be a praiseworthy occupation, but it is well-known that even there, great harm is done to animal life; and in the operation of digging the earth and ploughing, numberless creatures lurking in the ground and various other forms of animal life are destroyed. What do you think of that?

dhānyabījāni yāny āhur vṛthi ādīni dvijottama |  
sarvāṇy etāni jīvanti tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 20 ||

O good Brahmin, rice, wheat and all other seeds that are consumed are all living organisms. What is your opinion on this matter?

adhyākramya paśūm cāpi ghnanti vai bhakṣayanti ca |  
vṛkṣān athauṣadhīś caiv achindanti puruṣā dvija || 21 ||  
jīvā hi bahavo brahman vṛkṣeṣu ca phaleṣu ca |  
udake bahavaś cāpi tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 22 ||

<sup>5</sup> The *Mahabharata* narrates that Saudasa also known as Kalmashapada cultivates an intense hatred for Vashishtha and his sons — he ate the 99 brothers to seek his vengeance.

Men hunt wild animals and kill them and partake of their meat. They also cut up trees and herbs; but, O Brahmin, there are numerous living creatures in trees, in fruits, as also in water; don't you think so?

sarvaṁ vyāptam idaṁ brahman prāṇibhiḥ prāṇi-jīvanaiḥ |  
matsyā grasante matsyāṁś ca tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 23 ||

This whole creation, O Brahmin, is full of life, sustaining itself with food derived from other living things. Have you not noticed that fish prey upon other smaller fish.

sattvaiḥ sattvāni jīvanti bahudhā dvijasattama |  
prāṇino 'nyonyabhakṣāś ca tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 24 ||

Various species of animals prey upon other species, and there are species, the members of which prey upon each other. What's your opinion of this?

caṅkramyamāṇā jīvāṁś ca dharaṇī saṁśritān bahūn |  
padbhyāṁ ghnanti narā vipra tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 25 ||

People, O Brahmin, while walking about here and there, kill numerous little creatures lurking in the ground by trampling on them — what do you think?

upaviṣṭāḥ śayānāś ca ghnanti jīvān anekaśaḥ |  
jñānavijñānavantaś ca tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 26 ||

And even wise and enlightened people unknowingly destroy animal life in various ways, even while sleeping or reposing themselves. What have you to say to this?

jīvair grastam idaṁ sarvam ākāśam pṛthivī tathā |  
avijñānāc ca hiṁsanti tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 27 ||

The earth and the air all swarm with living organisms, which are unconsciously destroyed by people from mere ignorance. Is not this so?

ahimseti yad uktaṁ hi puruṣair vismitaiḥ purā |  
ke na hiṁsanti jīvan vai loke 'smin dvijasattama |  
bahu sañcintya iha vai nāsti kaś cid ahimsakaḥ || 28 ||

The injunction that people should not do harm to any creature (*ahimsa*), was ordained of old by men, who were ignorant of biological facts. For there is on one on the face of this earth, who is free from doing injury to creatures. After full consideration, the conclusion is irresistible that there is not a single person who is free from the sin of harming animal life.

ahimsāyāṁ tu niratā yatayo dvijasattama |  
kurvanti eva hi hiṁsāṁ te yatnād alpatarā bhavet || 29 ||

Even the sages whose vow is to do harm to no creature, inflict injury to animal life. Only, on account of greater attention and mindfulness on their part, the harm is less.

ālakṣyāś caiva puruṣāḥ kule jātā mahāguṇāḥ |  
mahāghoraṇi karmāṇi kṛtvā lajjanti vai na ca || 30 ||

Men of noble-birth and outstanding qualities perpetrate wicked acts in defiance of all, of which they are not at all ashamed.

### Commentary

This can be taken to refer to otherwise noble and well-intended men who engage in wars either by instigating or by participating in some way — actually fighting or working in

the supply chain, millions of people may die but yet they will justify their actions in some way or the other.

suhṛdaḥ suhṛdo 'nyāṁś ca durhṛdaś cāpi durhṛdaḥ |  
samyak pravṛttān puruṣān na samyag anupaśyataḥ || 31 ||

Friends acting in commendable ways with friends and enemies likewise with enemies are never regarded well by their peers. Friends are not always agreeable to friends, albeit endowed with high qualities.

saṁṛddhaiś ca na nandanti bāndhavā bāndhavair api |  
gurūṁś caiva vinindanti mūḍhāḥ paṇḍita māninaḥ || 32 ||

Relatives are not pleased with the progress and advancement of other relatives, and abuse them at every turn. And fools considering themselves learned and superior denounce their preceptors.

bahu loke viparyastaṁ dṛśyate dvijasattama |  
dharma yuktam adharmam ca tatra kiṁ pratibhāti te || 33 ||

This reversal of the natural order of things, O good Brahmin, is seen everywhere in this world. What is your opinion of Adharma masquerading as Dharma?

vaktuṁ bahu vidhaṁ śakyaṁ dharmādharmeṣu karmasu |  
svakarma nirato yo hi sa yaśo prāpnuyān mahat || 34 ||

There is much that can be said of the positivity or negativity of our actions. But whoever is dedicated wholeheartedly to his own proper occupation surely acquires a good reputation.

### || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 3



mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

sa tu vipro mahāprājña dharma-vyādham aprcchata |  
śiṣṭācāraṁ katham ahaṁ vidyām iti narottama || 1 ||

Markandeya said:– Then that intelligent Brahmin Kauśika asked the butcher:– "How shall I know what is virtuous conduct? "

vyādha uvāca

yajño dānaṁ tapo vedāḥ satyaṁ ca dvijasattama |  
pañcāitāni pavitrāṇi śiṣṭācāreṣu nityadā || 2 ||

The butcher replied:– "O best of Brahmins, yajñas, charity, asceticism<sup>6</sup>, the the study of the Vedas, and Truth — these five purifying deeds are integral aspects of conduct that is called virtuous.

kāma-krodhau vaśe kṛtvā dambhaṁ lobham anārjavam |  
dharmam ityevaṁ saṁtuṣṭāś te śiṣṭāḥ śiṣṭa saṁmatāḥ || 3 ||

Having subjugated self-referent desire<sup>7</sup> and anger, arrogance, avarice and crookedness, they that take pleasure in Dharma for its own sake, are regarded as really virtuous and worthy of the approbation of virtuous persons.

<sup>6</sup> Tapa or tapas is a difficult word to translate it means, austerity, self-control, self-deprivation, meditation, forbearance, stoicism etc.

na teṣāṃ bhidyate vṛttam yajña svādhyāya śīlinām |  
ācāra pālanam caiva dvitīyam śiṣṭa lakṣaṇam || 4 ||

These people who are devoted to yajñas; and the study of the Vedas have no independent behaviour — they only follow the examples of the honest and the good. This indeed, is the second attribute of the virtuous.

guru śuśrūṣaṇam satyam akrodho dānam eva ca |  
etaccatuṣṭayam brahmañ śiṣṭācāreṣu nityadā || 5 ||

Serving the gurus, adhering to truth, generosity and freedom from anger, these four, O Brahmin, are inseparably connected with behaviour that is virtuous.

śiṣṭācāre manaḥ kṛtvā pratiṣṭhāpya ca sarvaśaḥ |  
yām ayaṃ labhate tuṣṭim sā na śakyā hyato'nyathā || 6 ||

Except by cultivating these four virtues one cannot attain the reputation that one acquires by adhering unswervingly to virtuous behaviour.

vedasyopaniṣat satyam satyasyopaniṣad damaḥ |  
damasyopaniṣat tyāgaḥ śiṣṭācāreṣu nityadā || 7 ||

The essence of the *Vedas* is Truth<sup>8</sup>: the essence of Truth is self-control, and the essence of self-control is abstention from material indulgences. These are all aspects of behaviour that is virtuous.

ye tu dharmān asūyante buddhi mohānvitā narāḥ |  
apathā gacchatām teṣāṃ anuyātā ca pīḍyate || 8 ||

They who follow the deluded fools that mock the forms of Dharma prevailing in society, are dragged to their destruction for walking on such an erroneous path.

ye tu śiṣṭāḥ suniyatāḥ śruti tyāga parāyaṇāḥ |  
dharma panthānam ārūḍhāḥ satya dharma parāyaṇāḥ || 9 ||

They, however, are virtuous who are engaged in making positive resolutions, who are devoted to the teachings of the Vedas and abstention from material pleasures, they in fact tread on the path of Dharma and adhere to the true Dharma.

niyacchanti parām buddhim śiṣṭācārānvitā janāḥ |  
upādhyāyamate yuktāḥ sthityā dharmārtha darśinaḥ || 10 ||

They who are obedient to the instruction of their preceptors, and who reflect upon the meaning of the scriptures with patience and attentiveness are said to be behaving in a virtuous manner. It is these that are said to be properly guided by their higher intelligence.

nāstikān bhinna maryādān krūrān pāpamatau sthitān |  
tyaja tān jñānam āśritya dhārmikānupasevya ca || 11 ||

Forsaking those that reject the moral authority of the Vedas<sup>9</sup>, those that transgress limits, those that are of malefic disposition, those that live in iniquity and vice — apply yourself to accumulating knowledge while reverencing those that are virtuous.

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<sup>7</sup> *Kāma* literally means "desire" and is often translated as lust. I think a better understanding of the sense in which it is used is "self-referent desire" all those cravings that have oneself in mind, regarding the other as a means for one's gratification only.

<sup>8</sup> Truth is said to operate when there is harmony between thought, speech and action.



kāma lobha grahākīrṇaṁ pañcendriya jalām nadīm |  
nāvaṁ dhṛtimayīm kṛtvā janma durgāṇi santara || 12 ||

Self-referent desire and avarice are like crocodiles in the river of life; the waters are the five senses. Using the boat of patience and resignation cross over to the other side of this river, avoiding the eddies of suffering.

krameṇa sañcito dharmo buddhi yoga-mayo mahān |  
śiṣṭācāre bhavet sādhu rāgaḥ śukle va vāsasi || 13 ||

The supreme virtue consisting in the exercise of the intellect and the Yoga of contemplation, when gradually super-added to virtuous conduct, becomes beautiful like dye on white fabrics.

ahiṁsā satya vacanaṁ sarva bhūta hitaṁ param |  
ahiṁsā paramo dharmah sa ca satye pratiṣṭhitaḥ || 14 ||

Abstention from doing injury to any being and truthfulness are virtues highly beneficial to all creatures. Non-violence is a cardinal virtue, and is grounded in truth.

satyaṁ kṛtvā pratiṣṭhām tu pravartante pravṛttayaḥ |  
satyam eva garīyastu śiṣṭācāra niśevitam || 15 ||

Our minds have their proper play when their foundation is laid in truth, and in the exercise of virtue, truth is of the highest value. Irreproachable conduct is the characteristic of all good people.

ācāraśca satām dharmah santo hyācāra lakṣaṇāḥ |  
yo yathā prakṛtir jantuḥ sa svām prakṛtim aśnute || 16 ||

Those that are distinguished for right living are good and virtuous. All creatures follow the principles of conduct which are innate to them<sup>10</sup>.

pāpātmā krodha kāmādīn doṣān āpnoty anātmavān |  
ārambho nyāya-yukto yaḥ sa hi dharma iti smṛtaḥ || 17 ||

The wicked person who has no self-discipline and control acquires lust, anger and other vices. It is the immemorial rule that virtuous actions are those that are founded on social justice.

anācāraṣṭv adharmeti etacchiṣṭānuśāsanam |  
akrudhyanto'nasūyanto nirahamkāra matsarāḥ |  
ṛjavaḥ śama saṁpannāḥ śiṣṭācārā bhavanti te || 18 ||

And it is also ordained by great people that all iniquitous conduct is Adharma. Those who are not swayed by anger, arrogance, self-importance and envy, and those who are tranquil and honest, are virtuous.

vedoktaḥ prathamō dharmo dharma-śāstreṣu cāparaḥ |  
śiṣṭācīrṇaś śiṣṭānām trividhaṁ dharma lakṣaṇam || 19 ||

The previous ācāryas have taught that there are three sources of Dharma<sup>11</sup>, the primary source is the Veda, then the teaching of the *dharma-shastras*, and finally the conduct of the virtuous.

<sup>9</sup> *Nāstika* is often translated as *atheist* but this is incorrect, a *nāstika* is one who rejects the moral authority of the Vedas.

<sup>10</sup> *prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati* || Gītā 3:33 — all beings follow their own nature what can restraint do?

<sup>11</sup> *vedaḥ smṛtiḥ sadācāraḥ svasya ca priyamātmanaḥ* | *etaccaturvidhaṁ prāhuḥ sāḥśād dharmasya lakṣaṇam* ||  
The Veda, tradition, the conduct of virtuous people and one's own conscience,



dhāraṇam cāpi vedānām tīrthānām avagāhanam |  
kṣamā satyārjavam śaucam śiṣṭācāra nidarśanam || 20 ||

And virtuous conduct is indicated by the avid acquisition of knowledge, pilgrimage to sacred places, truthfulness, forgiveness, purity and honesty.

sarva bhūta dayāvanto hyahimsā niratāḥ sadā |  
paruṣam ca na bhāṣante sadā santo dvija-priyāḥ || 21 ||

Virtuous people are always compassionate to all creatures, non-violent and well-disposed towards spiritual aspirants. They never speak rudely to others.

dāna-nityāḥ sukhānyāśu prāpnuvanti-api ca śriyam |  
pīḍayā ca kalatrasya bhrtyānām ca samāhitāḥ || 22 ||

The virtuous person when solicited for assistance by the worthy, bestow alms on them to their maximum ability, even to the deprivation of the comforts of his wife and servants.

trīṇyeva tu padāny āhuḥ satām vṛttam anusmaran |  
na caiva druhyed dadyācca satyam caiva sadā vadet || 23 ||

These three are said to constitute the perfect way of the virtuous, not doing wrong to any body, generosity, and truthfulness.

etat te sarvam ākhyātām yathā prajñam yathāśrutam |  
śiṣṭācāra guṇān brahman puraskṛtya dvijarśabha || 24 ||

Thus, O great Brahmin, I have introduce to you the subject of virtuous conduct, I have described to you all this, according to my own knowledge and to what I have heard on the subject."

## || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 4



vyādha uvāca

śruti pramāṇo dharmo'yam iti vṛddhānuśāsanam |  
sūkṣmā gatirhi dharmas bahu-śākhā hyanantikā || 1 ||

It is the dictum of the elders that the Vedas are the ultimate authority in matters of Dharma. This is correct, but the ways of righteousness are subtle, diverse and infinite.

prāṇāntike vivāhe ca vaktavyam anṛtaṁ bhavet |  
anṛtena bhavet satyam satyenaivānṛtaṁ bhavet || 2 ||

[According to the Vedas, Dharma is truth and Adharma is untruth] But when a life is at stake and in the matter of marriage, it is acceptable to tell an untruth. Untruth sometimes leads to the triumph of truth, and the latter declines into untruth.

### Commentary

In the Karna Parva there is a story about another sage named Kaushika who had taken a vow of truth. One day some people fleeing from some robbers hid themselves in the jungle near the ashram. The robbers arrived at the ashram and enquired of Kaushika the whereabouts of the fugitives, and he devoted to his vow of truth, directed the robbers to

their hiding place. The wicked merciless robbers caught the fugitives and murdered them all. After death Kaushika was sent to hell for his indiscretion.

In the case of marriage telling a white lie with good intent is permissible. If for example the bride was engaged before, or had an abortion and this fact becoming known to the suitors family would result in the cancellation of the proposal, telling a lie would not be an offence all other factors being equal.

yad bhūta hitam atyantam tat satyam iti dhāraṇā |  
viparyaya kṛto'dharmaḥ paśya dharmasya sūkṣmatām || 3 ||

Whichever conduces most to the good of all beings is considered to be truth. Sometimes untruth, which is the opposite of Dharma benefits others — so you see, Dharma is extremely subtle.

yat karoti aśubham karma śubham vā yadi sattama |  
avaśyam tat samāpnoti puruṣo nātra saṁśayaḥ || 4 ||

People's actions are classified as being either good or bad, and every one undoubtedly reaps their rewards of their actions [which are committed with intent.]

viśamāṁ ca daśāṁ prāpto devān garhati vai bhṛṣam |  
ātmanah karma doṣeṇa na vijānātya paṇḍitaḥ || 5 ||

The ignorant having fallen on hard times, grossly abuse the gods, not accepting that it is the consequence of their own evil karma.

mūḍho naikṛtikaścāpi capalaśca dvijottama |  
sukha duḥkha viparyāso yadā samupapadyate |  
nainam prajñā sunītaṁ vā trāyate naiva pauruṣam || 6 ||

The foolish, the unscrupulous and the fickle, are always swinging on a pendulum of happiness and sorrow. Neither learning lessons nor good morals, nor that personal exertion is not enough to succeed.

### Commentary

The outcome of every project is dependant on a number of factors 1. the effort of oneself, 2. the effort of others, 3. circumstances, 4. the individual Karma of everyone involved as well as the group karma, 5. the grace of the gods. The only one of these factors that one can control is the effort that one can exert and this too is limited to capacity and ability. One is enjoined therefore to strive to the utmost but not to be concerned about the outcomes.

*karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana |  
mā karma phala hetur bhū mā saṅgo'sta karmaṇi || Gītā 2:47*

"To work alone you have the right, and not to the fruits. Do not allow rewards to be your motive for action. Nor be attached to inaction."

yo 'yam icched yathā kāmaṁ taṁ taṁ kāmaṁ sa āpnuyāt |  
yadi syād aparādhīnaṁ pauruṣas kriyāphalam || 7 ||

And if the success of our projects were not dependent on anything else [other than self-effort], people would attain the object of their desire, by simply striving to attain it.

saṁyatāścāpi dakṣāśca matimantaśca mānavāḥ |  
dṛśyante niṣphalāḥ santaḥ prahīṇāḥ sarva karmabhiḥ || 8 ||

It is observed that skilful, intelligent and diligent people are baffled in their efforts, and often do not attain the results that they were striving for.

bhūtānām aparāḥ kaścīd-hiṁsāyām satatottithaḥ |  
vañcanāyām ca lokasya sa sukheṇaiva yujyate || 9 ||

On the other hand, people who are maliciously disposed towards others and practice cheating and deception in public, often lead happy and successful lives.

aceṣṭamapi cāsīnam śrīḥ kañcid upatiṣṭhati |  
kaścit karmāṇi kurvan hi na prāpyam adhigacchati || 10 ||

There are some who attain prosperity without any exertion whatsoever. And there are others, who, with the utmost exertion are unable to achieve their just dues.

devāniṣṭvā tapastaptvā kṛpaṇaiḥ putragrdhnuḥ |  
daśamāsadhṛtā garbhā jāyante kulapāmsanāḥ || 11 ||

Some miserable people with the object of having sons born to them worship the gods, and practise severe austerities, and those sons after having remained in the womb for ten months at length turn out to be the most disgraceful to their community.

apare dhana dhānyaiśca bhogaiśca piṭṛ sañcitaiḥ |  
vipulair abhijāyante labdhās taireva maṅgalaiḥ || 12 ||

And others are born who idly pass their lives away in luxury wasting all the wealth and grain accumulated by their forebears.

karmajā hi manuṣyāṇām rogā nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ |  
ādhibhiścaiva bādhyante vyādhaiḥ kṣudra mṛgā iva || 13 ||

The diseases from which people suffer, are undoubtedly the result of their own karma. They are racked with mental troubles and they then behave like small deer at the hands of hunters.

te cāpi kuśalair vaidyair nipuṇaiḥ sambhṛtauṣadhaiḥ |  
vayādhayo vinivāryante mṛgā vyādhair iva dvija || 14 ||

And, O Brahmin, as hunters intercept the flight of their game, the progress of those diseases is checked by able and skilful physicians with their collections of drugs.

yeṣāmasti ca bhoktavyam grahaṇīdoṣa pīditāḥ |  
na śaknuvanti te bhoktuṁ ceṣṭitaṁ pūrva karmayā || 15 ||

And, you have no doubt observed that sometimes those who have a mass of gourmet food available are prevented from enjoying it because of chronic bowel-ailments.

apare bāhu balinaḥ kliśyanti bahavo janāḥ |  
duḥkhena cādhigacchanti bhojanam dvijasattama || 16 ||

There are many others that are strong and powerful, but suffer from misery, and have great difficulty in obtain food (i.e. a livelihood).

iti lokam anākrandaṁ moha śoka pariplutam |  
srotasā'sakṛd ākṣiptaṁ hriyamāṇaṁ balīyasā || 17 ||

In this *samsāra*<sup>12</sup> every one is thus helpless, overcome by delusion and sorrow, and again and again tossed about and overpowered by the powerful current of Karma.

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<sup>12</sup> *Samsāra* is the flow of existence, of birth and death and reincarnation.

na mriyeyurna jīryaiyuḥ sarve syuḥ sarva kāmikāḥ |  
nāpriyaṁ pratipaśyeyur vidhiśca yadi no bhavet || 18 ||

If there were absolute freedom of action, no creature would die, none would be subject to old age, and everybody would attain their desired objects. Nobody would experience grief.

uparyupari lokasya sarvo gantum samīhate |  
yatate ca yathāśakti na ca tad vartate tathā || 19 ||

Every one desires to out distance their neighbours [in the race of life], and they strive to do so to the utmost of their power; but the result often turns out otherwise.

bahavaḥ saṁpradṛśyante tulya nakṣatra maṅgalāḥ |  
mahat tu phala vaiśamyam dṛśyate karma siddhiṣu || 20 ||

Many are born under the influence of the same star (*nakshatra*<sup>13</sup>) and the same auspicious astrological signs; but a great diversity is observable in their achievements.

na kecid īśate brahman svayaṁgrāhyasya sattama |  
karmaṇām prakṛtānām vai iha siddhiḥ pradṛśyate || 21 ||

No one can determine the circumstances in which they find themselves. The actions done in a previous existence are seen to fructify in our present life.

tathā śrutir iyaṁ brahmaṇ jīvaḥ kila sanātanaḥ |  
śarīram adhruvaṁ loke sarveśāṁ prāṇinām iha || 22 ||

According to the Vedas, the Self (*jīvātma*) is eternal, but the corporeal bodies of all creatures are subject to destruction here.

vadhyamāne śarīre tu dehanāśo bhavaty-uta |  
jīvaḥ saṁkramate'nyatra karma bandha-nibandhanaḥ || 23 ||

When life is extinguished, only the body is destroyed, but the conscious Self doesn't die, linked inseparably with its Karma it enters into another body.

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi |  
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny-anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī ||

As a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the embodied Self cast off its worn-out bodies and enter into others that are new. (Gītā 2:22)

brāhmaṇa uvāca

katham dharma-vidām śreṣṭha jīvo bhavati śāśvataḥ |  
etad iccāmyaṁ jñātuṁ tattvena vadatāmvara || 24 ||

The Brahmin replied:– "O great orator and best of those versed in the doctrine of karma, I long to know accurately how the Self is considered eternal."

vyādha uvāca

na jīvanāśosti hi deha bhede, mithyaitad āhur mriyatīti mūḍhāḥ |  
jīvastu dehāntaritaḥ prayāti, daśārdhataivāsya śarīrabhedaḥ || 25 ||

<sup>13</sup> The Zodiac of 12 signs and 360 degrees is divided into 27 divisions and each of these sub-divisions is called a *nakshatra* which is a snapshot of the birth chart.

The butcher replied:– 'When the body dies the Self does not. They are mistaken, who foolishly say that all creatures die. There is in fact simply a change of tenement. The body is composed of five elements.

*dehino'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā |  
tathā dehāntara prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati ||*

Just as the embodied Self passes through childhood, youth and old age [pertaining to that body], so [at death] it passes into another body. A wise man is not confused thereby. (Gītā 2:13)

anyo hi nāśnāti kṛtaṁ hi karma manuṣyaloke manuṣas kaścit |  
yat tena kiñciddhi kṛtaṁ hi karma tad aśnute nāsti kṛtasya nāśaḥ || 26 ||

In this material world, no one experiences the consequences of someone else's Karma. Whatever a person does has consequences which that person alone experiences. The results of actions never perish.

supuṇyaśīlā hi bhavanti puṇyā narādhamāḥ pāpa-kṛto bhavanti |  
naro'nuyātaṣṭviha karmabhiḥ svaish tataḥ samutpadyati bhāvitā taiḥ || 27 ||

Whatever one does, one is sure to reap the consequences thereof; for the consequences of the *Karma* that is done, can never be avoided. The virtuous become endowed with great virtues, and the sinful become the perpetrators of wicked deeds. People's actions follow them; and influenced by these, they are born again and again.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

kathaṁ sambhavate yonau kathaṁ vā puṇya-pāpayoḥ |  
jātiḥ puṇyā hyapuṇyāś kathaṁ gacchati sattama || 28 ||

The Brahmin enquired:– "How does the Self take its birth, and what are the determinants of its becoming virtuous or sinful, and how does it come to belong to an advantaged or disadvantaged community?"

vyādha uvāca

garbhādhāna samāyuktaṁ karmedaṁ sampradṛṣyate |  
samāseṇa tu te kṣipraṁ pravakṣyāmi dvijottama || 29 ||

The butcher replied:– "This unfathomable mystery seems to belong to the subject of procreation, but I shall briefly describe it to you.

yathā sambhṛta sambhāraḥ punar eva prajāyate |  
śubha kṛcchubha yonīṣu pāpa kṛt pāpayonīṣu || 30 ||

I will explain to you how the Self accumulates the seeds of Karma and takes rebirth. Those that do auspicious acts take higher births and the doers of inauspicious acts take lower births.

śubhaiḥ prayogair devatvaṁ vyāmiśrair mānuṣa bhavet |  
mohanīyair viyonīṣu tvadhogāmī ca kilbiṣaiḥ || 31 ||

By the performance of virtuous actions one attains to the state of the gods, and by a combination of good and evil, one acquires a human birth; by indulgence in rank sensuality and similar demoralising practices, one is born in the lower species of animals, and by deplorable acts, one goes to the infernal regions.

jāti mṛtyu jarā duḥkhaiḥ satataṁ samabhidrutaḥ |  
saṁsāre pacyamānaśca doṣair ātma kṛtair naraḥ || 32 ||

Because of the consequences of their own actions, *jīvas* are subjected to the miseries of birth, old-age and death. People are repeatedly born and die and are metamorphosed<sup>14</sup> here in *samsara*.

tiryag yoni sahasrāṇi gatvā narakam eva ca |  
jīvāḥ saṁparivartante karma bandha nibandhanāḥ || 33 ||

Passing through thousands of animal births<sup>15</sup> as also the infernal regions, the *jīvas* wander about, secured by the bonds of their own karma.

tataḥ karma samādatte punar anyan na vaṁ bahu |  
pacyate tu punas tena bhuktvā'pathyam ivāturaḥ || 34 ||

In the human birth they accumulate a new series of Karma, and they consequently continue to suffer misery over again, like sick people partaking of unwholesome food;

ajasram eva duḥkhārto' duḥkhiṭaḥ sukhi saṁjñitaḥ |  
tato 'nīṛtta bandhatvāt karmaṇām udayād api |  
parikrāmati saṁsāre cakravad bahu vedanaḥ || 35 ||

Although they are thus afflicted, they consider themselves to be happy and at ease and consequently their [conditioned] constraints are not loosened and more new Karma arises; and suffering from diverse miseries they roam about in this *samsara* like a wheel.

*īśvaraḥ sarva bhūtānām hr̥ddeśo' rjuna tiṣṭhati |*  
*bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍāni māyayā ||*

The Lord abides in the heart of every being, O Arjuna, spinning them round and round, by His power, as if they were mounted on a machine. (Gītā 18:61)

sa cen nīṛtta bandhastu viśuddhaścāpi karmabhiḥ |  
tapo yoga samārambhaṁ kurute dvijasattama |  
karmabhir bahubhiś cāpi lokān aśnāti mānavaḥ || 36 ||

If they desire to liberate themselves from their [conditioned] constraints they purify themselves by their virtuous actions and begin the practise of self-restraint and yoga, then, O best of Brahmins, they attain the higher realms of bliss by these numerous acts of merit.

pāpaṁ kurvan pāpa-vṛttaḥ pāpasyāntarā na gacchati |  
tasmāt puṇyaṁ yatet kartuṁ varjayīta ca pāpakam || 37 ||

The malefactor who is addicted to vices, creates the *vr̥ttis* which only increase the cycle of malefaction. Therefore we must strive to do what is virtuous and refrain from doing what is unrighteous.

### Commentary

*Vṛttis* — Literally "Waves" in the consciousness. Every experience is associated with a number of factors; people, sounds, tastes, smells etc. If the experience is pleasurable or painful it makes an impression on the mind. That impression (*samskāra*) sinks into the *citta* — sub-conscious mind. After some time, days, months or even years, a trigger memory activates the dormant *samskāra* which then produces a desire to either repeat or avoid the experience. Repeated experience reinforces the *samskāra*. A reinforced *samskāra* or group of *samskāras* produce a *vāsana* or an habitual pattern of behaviour.

<sup>14</sup> *pacyamāna* — means "cooked" i.e. prepared, matured and evolved through the karmic challenges and experiences.

<sup>15</sup> We are told by Śāstra that we take 8,400,000 births in lower species before attaining a human birth.

Some of these *vāsanās* are actively pursued and developed and are necessary for our sociological functioning.

Our personality is composed of a combination of all these *saṁskāras* and it is the sum total of unfulfilled *saṁskāras* that comprise the cause for future rebirths.

anasūyuh kṛtajñāśca kalyāṇānyeva sevate |  
sukhāni dharmam arthaṁ ca svargaṁ ca labhate naraḥ || 38 ||

A virtuous person who is free from criticizing the faults of others, who is always grateful and always strives to benefit other beings, attains wealth, virtue, happiness and heaven.

saṁskṛtasya ca dāntas niyatasya yatātmanaḥ |  
prājñāśyānantarā vṛttir ihi loke paratra ca || 39 ||

Those who are purified of misdeeds, wise, forbearing, consistent in righteousness, and self-restrained enjoy continuous felicity in this, as well as in the next world.

satām dharmeṇa varteta kriyām śiṣṭavad ācaret |  
asaṁkleśena lokasya vṛttiṁ lipseta vai dvijaḥ || 40 ||

People must follow the standard of virtue of the good and in all acts emulate the example of the righteous and follow a livelihood which causes no detriment to the world.

### Commentary

According to the Lakshmi Tantra chapter 28;25, there are seven legitimate ways for a spiritual aspirant to make a living:—

1. *daya* — inheritance
2. *labha* — profit from honest commerce and trade.
3. *kṛaya* — purchase of land and assets for the purpose of speculation.
4. *jaya* — winning of prizes or money in a competition
5. *prayoga* — through the application of sacred learning and performing of rituals i.e., teaching and sacrificing for others in the case of brahmins and teaching in general and counselling and advising for those who are not brahmins.
6. *karma yoga* — through a profession or a vocational job serving others.
7. *sat-pratigraha* — the acceptance of lawful gifts — that is, unsolicited donations from worthy sources.

santi hyāgama vijñānāḥ śiṣṭāḥ śāstre vicakṣaṇāḥ |  
svadharमेṇa kriyā loke kurvāṇāste hyasaṁkarāḥ || 41 ||

There are many learned scholars who are well-educated in the Agamas and Shastras who are great role models. Following their example and instruction one should act. In this way there will be no confusion.

prājño dharmeṇa ramate dharmam caivopajīvati |  
tasmād dharmād avāptena dhanena dvijasattama |  
tasyaiva siṁcate mūlaṁ guṇān paśyati yatra vai || 42 ||

The wise delight in virtue and relying on dharma they live their lives. And in virtuous ways acquire wealth, which they then spend on the promotion and nurturing of Dharma. They see value in Dharma only.

dharmātmā bhavati hyevaṁ cittam cāsya prasīdati |  
sa mitra-jana saṁtuṣṭa iha pretya ca nandati || 43 ||



Such people are known as *Dharmātmās*, and their minds are purified<sup>16</sup>, they are pleased with their friends and rejoice here and in the next life.

śabdam sparśam tathā rūpam gandhān iṣṭānśca sattama |  
prabhutvam labhate cāpi dharmasyaitat phalam viduḥ || 44 ||

Virtuous people acquire dominion and the pleasure of beauty, flavour, sound and touch according to their desires. These are known to be the rewards of virtue.

dharmasya ca phalam labdhvā na tuṣyati mahādvija |  
atuṣyamāṇo nirvedamādatte jñāna-cakṣuṣā || 45 ||

But enlightened people, O great Brahmin, are not satisfied with simply reaping the fruits of righteousness, they are fully cognisant of the instability of sensual pleasures and so cultivate dispassion.

prajñā-cakṣur nara iha doṣam naivānurudhyate |  
virajye yathā kāmam na ca dharmam vimuñcati || 46 ||

One who possesses the light of spiritual wisdom becomes indifferent to pain and pleasure and the attractions of the world and never abandons Dharma.

sarva tyāge ca yatate dṛṣṭvā lokam kriyātmakam |  
tato mokṣe prayatate nānupāyād upāyataḥ || 47 ||

Observing that everything is impermanent, one tries to renounce everything and counting on more change and transformation one devises means for the attainment of Liberation.

tapo niḥśreyasam jantos tasya mūlam śamo damaḥ |  
tena sarvān avāpnoti kāmān yān manasecchati || 48 ||

Meditation is the prime requisite for seekers of Liberation, its roots are equanimity and discipline. By this means one attains all the objects of desire.

indriyāṇām nirodhena satyena ca damena ca |  
brahmaṇaḥ padam āpnoti yatparam dvijasattama || 49 ||

But subduing the senses and practicing truthfulness and forbearance, one attains, O good Brahmin, the supreme peace of unification with Brahman.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

indriyāṇīti yānyāhuḥ kāni tāni yata vrata |  
nigrahaśca katham kāryo nigrahasya ca kim phalam || 50 ||

The Brahmin again enquired:– "What are the senses that you speak of? How can they be subdued? What is the good of subduing them?"

katham ca phalam āpnoti teṣām dharmabhṛtāmvara |  
etaḥ iccāmi tattvena dharmam jñātuṁ sudhārmika || 51 ||

How does one get the benefit thereof? I would really like to understand this and to acquaint myself with the truth of this matter."

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<sup>16</sup> The "dirt" of the mind is:- *kāma* – selfish desire, *krodha* – anger, *moha* – delusion, *mada* – arrogance, *lobha* – avarice, *mātsarya* – malicious envy. The attenuation of these constitutes the purification of the mind.



॥ śrīḥ ॥  
adhyāyaḥ 5



vyādha uvāca

vijñānārthaṁ manuṣyāṇāṁ manaḥ pūrvaṁ pravartate |  
tat prāpya kāmaṁ bhajate krodhaṁ ca dvijasattama || 1 ||

The butcher said:– "People's minds are at first bent on the acquisition of knowledge [of their desired subject]. Once they've acquired knowledge, they indulge in their passions and desires – the frustration of which leads to anger.

tatas tad arthaṁ yatate karma cārabhate mahat |  
iṣṭānāṁ rūpa gandhānām abhyāsaṁ ca niśevate || 2 ||

And when an attraction arises to particular objects of pleasure – beauty, smell etc, they strive hard and engage in projects of great magnitude to obtain them, and then indulge in them to the maximum.

tato rāgaḥ prabhavati dveṣāśca tadanantaram |  
tato lobhaḥ prabhavati mohaśca tadanantaram || 3 ||

Then follows attachment, then aversion to anything that threatens that, then avarice follows and then delusion [extinguishing of spiritual insight].

tato lobhābhibhūtasya rāga dveṣa hatasya ca |  
na dharme jāyate buddhir vyājād dharmaṁ karoti ca || 4 ||

And when people are thus influenced by avarice, and overcome by attraction and aversion, their intellect ceases to be guided by Dharma and if they *do* practise, it involves some deception.

vyājena carate dharmam arthaṁ vyājena rocate |  
vyājena sidhyamāneṣu dhaneṣu dvijasattama |  
tatraiva ramate buddhis tataḥ pāpaṁ cikīrṣati || 5 ||

Practising Dharma with hypocrisy, they are content to acquire wealth by dishonourable means. Because of the ease of acquisition they become enamoured of those unscrupulous methods, and begin a life of crime.

suhṛdbhir vāryamāṇaśca paṇḍitaiśca dvijottama |  
uttaraṁ śruti sambaddhaṁ bravītya-śruti yojitam || 6 ||

And when, O good Brahmin, their concerned and well-meaning friends and counsellors remonstrate with them, they are always ready with specious answers, which are neither sound nor convincing.

adharmaś trividhaś tasya vartate rāga-doṣajaḥ |  
pāpaṁ cintayate caiva bravīti ca karoti ca |  
tasyādharmā pravṛttasya guṇā naśyanti sādharmaḥ || 7 ||

Being engrossed in their discreditable ways they commit sin in thought, in word, and in deed. Being addicted to malpractice they lose any good qualities they had.

ekaśīlāśca mitratvaṁ bhajante pāpa-karmaṇaḥ |  
sa tena duḥkham āpnoti paratra ca vipadyate || 8 ||

They cultivate the friendship of men of similar vicious character, and consequently they suffer misery in this life as well as in the next.

pāpātmā bhavati hyevaṁ dharma lābhaṁ tu me śṛṇu |  
yastvetān prajñāyā doṣān pūrvam evānupaśyati || 9 ||

This is the nature of the delinquent, and now listen as I describe the paragon. He foresees all these afore-mentioned evils by means of spiritual insight.

kuśalaḥ sukha-duḥkheṣu sāmādhūnīcāpy upasevate |  
tasya sādhu samārambhād buddhir dharmeṣu rājate || 10 ||

He is able to skilfully discriminate between happiness and misery, and is full of respectful attention to principled people, and from practising rectitude, his mind becomes even more inclined to Dharma."

brāhmaṇa uvāca

bravīṣi sūnṛtaṁ dharmam yasya vaktā na vidyate |  
divya prabhāvaḥ sumahān ṛṣireva mat'osi me || 11 ||

The Brahmin replied:— "You have given a clear exposition of Dharma which none else is able to expound. Your spiritual force is amazing, and you appear to me to be like a great Rishi."

vyādha uvāca

brāhmaṇā vai mahābhāgāḥ pitaro'grabhujaḥ sadā |  
teṣāṁ sarvātmanā kāryaṁ priyaṁ loke maṇīśiṇā || 12 ||

The butcher replied:— "The great Brahmins and the ancestors are worshipped with the same honours and they are always propitiated with offerings of food before others. Wise people in this world do what is pleasing to them, with all their heart.

yat teṣāṁ ca priyaṁ tatte vakṣyāmi dvijasattama |  
namaskṛtvā brāhmaṇebhyo brāhmīṁ vidyāṁ nibodha me || 13 ||

Having offered my salutations to all the priestly class I shall now describe to you what is pleasing to them. I shall teach you the Brahmanic philosophy.

idaṁ viśvaṁ jagat sarvaṁ ajagaccāpi sarvaśaḥ |  
mahā bhūtātmaṁ brahmaṇ nātaḥ parataraṁ bhavet || 14 ||

This whole universe comprised of moving and unmoving creatures and consisting of the five elements is the physical manifestation of Brahman. There is nothing higher than this.

### Commentary

The basic premise of Brahmanism is that the entire universe with its trillions of galaxies is the corporeal manifestation of the Divine Consciousness. The universe is not a "creation" but rather a projection or expansion of the Divine Nature — Brahman or Nārāyaṇa. The Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad describes this as follows:—

"Nārāyaṇa is eternal. Brahma is Nārāyaṇa. Siva is Nārāyaṇa. Indra is Nārāyaṇa. Time is Nārāyaṇa. Space is Nārāyaṇa, the intermediate quarters also are Nārāyaṇa. That which is above is Nārāyaṇa. That which is below is Nārāyaṇa. That which is within and that which is without is Nārāyaṇa. The entire Universe which existed and that which will exist is Nārāyaṇa. Nārāyaṇa is the only One that is partless, immaculate, inconceivable, indescribable, pure and divine. There is no second. Whosoever knows Him thus, becomes Vishnu."

mahābhūtāni khaṁ vāyur agnir āpas tathā ca bhūḥ |  
śabdaḥ sparśaśca rūpaṁ ca raso gandhaś tad guṇāḥ || 15 ||

The earth, air, water, fire and space are the five great elements. And form, odour, sound, touch and taste are their characteristic properties.

teṣāṁ api guṇāḥ sarve guṇavṛttiḥ parasparam |  
pūrva pūrva guṇāḥ sarve kramaṣo guṇiṣu triṣu || 16 ||

These latter – form etc. also have their properties which are also correlated to each other. And inhere in the three qualities (fire, water and earth),

śaṣṭhī tu cetanā nāma mana ityabhidhīyate |  
saptamī tu bhaved buddhir ahaṁkāras tataḥ param || 17 ||

The sixth factor is consciousness which is called the mind. The seventh is intelligence and after that comes egoism<sup>17</sup> as the eighth.

indriyāṇi ca pañcātmā rajaḥ satvaṁ tamaś tathā |  
ityeṣa sapta-daśako rāśir avyakta saṁjñakaḥ || 18 ||

Then come the five senses, then the vital force known as *prāṇa*, and the qualities called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These seventeen [in their potential state] are said to be the "unmanifest".

sarvair ihendriyārthaistu vyaktāvyaktaiḥ susaṁvṛtaiḥ |  
catur-viṁśaka ityeṣa vyaktāvyakta-mayo guṇaḥ |  
etat te sarvam ākhyātāṁ kiṁ bhūyaḥ śrotum icchasi || 19 ||

I have explained to you about the five organs of knowledge with their targets, along with *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṁkāra* and *prāṇa* all fourteen of these having manifest and unmanifest forms. Now what else do you wish to know?

## || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 6



brāhmaṇa uvāca

mahābhūtāni yānyāhuḥ pañca dharma-vidāṁ vara |  
ekaikasya guṇāṁ samyak pañcānām api me vada || 1 ||

The Brahmin said:– "O best of the cherishers of Dharma, please describe to me in full the properties of these five great elements of which you speak."

vyādha uvāca

bhūmir āpas tathā jyotir vāyur ākāśam eva ca |  
guṇottarāṇi sarvāṇi teṣāṁ vakṣyāmi te guṇān || 2 ||

The butcher replied:– "The earth, water, fire, air and space all have properties interlinking with each other. I shall describe them to you.

bhūmiḥ pañcaguṇā brahmaṇ udakaṁ ca catur guṇam |  
guṇāś trayas tejasi ca trayaścākāśa vātayoḥ || 3 ||

<sup>17</sup> *Ahaṁkāra* is usually translated as "egoism" but it actually refers to the "I-maker" i.e. the various personalities we construct for ourselves in order to interface with the world around us.

The earth, O Brahmin, has five qualities, water has four, fire has three and the air has two and space has one property.

śabdaḥ sparśaśca rūpaṁ ca raso gandhaśca pañcamah |  
eteguṇāḥ pañca bhūmeḥ sarvebhyo guṇavattarāḥ || 4 ||

Sound, touch, form, odour and taste — these five qualities belong to earth and thus the earth has the most properties.

śabdaḥ sparśaśca rūpaṁ ca saraścāpi dvijottama |  
apām ete guṇā brahman kīrtitās tava suvrata || 5 ||

Sound, touch, form and taste, O best of Brahmins, have been described to you as the properties of water.

śabdaḥ sparśaśca rūpaṁ ca tejaso'tha guṇāstrayaḥ |  
śabdaḥ sparśaśca vāyau tu śabdaścākāśa eva tu || 6 ||

And sound, touch and form are the three properties of fire and air has two properties sound and touch, and sound is the single property of space.

ete pañcadaśa brahman guṇā bhūteṣu pañcasu |  
vartante sarva bhūteṣu yeṣu lokāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ || 7 ||

And, O Brahmin, these fifteen properties inherent in the five elements, exist in all substances of which this universe is composed.

### Commentary

The last five principles of the Sāṅkhya system are called *Mahā-bhūtas*, derived from the word *mahā* — “great” and the root *bhū* — “to be, to come into being, to exist.” They are the five conditioned material states into which Cosmic Substance (*Prakṛti*) finally differentiates itself.

The five Elements (*Mahā-bhūtas*) are postulated in order to account for the channels through which the Subtle Elements (*Tan-mātras*) manifest themselves. For example the *Tan-mātra* of Sound cannot be heard if it does not have the *Mahā-bhūta* of Ether to serve as its channel.

Each Element or Sense-Particular (*Mahā-bhūta*) proceeds and is conditioned by the one immediately preceding it, and has an additional property of grossness.

Particular	Principle of	Function	Properties				
Ether	vacuity	space	sound				
Air	motion	pressure	sound	touch			
Energy	luminosity	expansion	sound	touch	form		
Water	liquidity	contraction	sound	touch	form	taste	
Earth	solidity	cohesion	sound	touch	form	taste	smell

anyonyaṁ nātivartante samyakva bhavati dvija |  
yadā tu viśamaṁ bhāvam ācaranti carācarāḥ || 8 ||  
tadā dehī deham anyam vyatirohati kālataḥ |  
prātilomyādvinaśyanti jāyante cānupūrvaśaḥ || 9 ||

And they are not opposed to one another; they exist, in proper combination and function in harmony. When this [latent] universe, in a state of rest is disturbed, then every sentient being under the instigation of time, assumes an appropriate body [in accordance with its Karmic residue]. When the body dies these elements disintegrate in regressive order and when manifesting in a progressive order.

### Commentary

The universe alternates between states of evolution (*sr̥ṣṭi*) and involution (*pralaya*). In between these two active states there is a period of latency in which the universe is at perfect rest and all the elements and gunas are in perfect balance. When this balance is disturbed due to the influence of time (*kāla*) and the collective Karma of all the individual modes or sparks of consciousness which constitute the mass of *jīvātmas* — then the *jīvas* take on physical bodies in accordance with their individual Karmic propensities.

Everything is temporary and whatever has a beginning has an end. All evolution ends in involution. During the dissolution of the world, the products return by a reverse movement into the preceding stages of development, and ultimately merge back into *Prakṛti*.

Earth merges into its cause, water, water into fire, fire into air, air into space; and space into *manas* and *manas* into *Ahaṅkāra* (individuating Principle), and *ahaṅkāra* into *Mahat* (intellect), and *Mahat* back into *Prakṛti*. This is the process of involution. There is no end to Samsāra or the play of *Prakṛti*. This cycle of evolution and involution has neither a beginning nor an end.

When the universe returns to its latency all the *jīvas* rest in a state of suspended animation - each still associated with its Karmic propensities in the form of *saṁskāras* — subliminal activators - seed impressions in the mind. Under the influence of Time these seeds begin to "sprout" leading to rebirth.

tatra tatrahī dṛśyante dhātavaḥ pāñcabhautikāḥ |  
yairāvṛtam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagat sthāvara jaṅgamam || 10 ||

And these five elementary properties are found in every one of the components of the body and in everything of which all the mobile and immobile world is composed.

indriyair gṛhyate yadyat tattad vyaktam iti smṛtam |  
tad avyaktam iti jñeyam liṅga grāhyam atīndriyam || 11 ||

Whatever is perceptible by the five senses, is called *vyakta* (manifest or knowable) and whatever is beyond the reach of the senses and can only be cognised by assumption, is known to be *avyakta* (unmanifest).

yathāsvaṁ grāhakānyeśāṁ śabdādīnām imāni tu |  
indriyāṇi tathā dehī dhārayan iha tapyate || 12 ||

When a person engages in the discipline of self-examination, after having subdued the senses which have their own proper objective play in the external conditions of sound, form, &c, then one is said to be performing *tapas*.

### Commentary

The process of TAPAS or "heat generation" also known as *austerity*, is the subduing of the senses – which means restraining the senses from their natural pursuit of their targets i.e. the eye seeks forms, the nose smell, the tongue taste, the ears sound, the genitals sex. One engaged in *tapas* refrains from pursuing those natural inclinations which arise spontaneously. This restraining of the senses or directing the attention inward in yoga is known as *pratyahāra* — withdrawal of the attention and is the first stage of meditation.

When this process of meditation is continued one eventually achieves a state of expanded consciousness in which one realizes one's essential identity with the entire universe — in scientific terms the entire universe and our own bodies are all comprised of atoms. Thus from a quantum physics point of view we are all non-different.

The Jīvātman is a module of consciousness and the universe according to Vedānta, comprises of matter, energy and consciousness.

loke vitatam ātmānaṁ lokam cātmani paśyati |  
parāvarajñāḥ yaḥ saktaḥ sa tu bhūtāni paśyati || 13 ||

One then perceives one's own essence pervading the universe, and the universe reflected in oneself. Thus one who realizes the Absolute Reality free from conditioning sees all the elements as pertaining to oneself.

*sarva-bhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarva-bhūtāni cātmani |  
īkṣate yoga-yuktātmā sarvatra sama-darśanaḥ ||*

With the mind harmonised by Yoga one sees equality everywhere; one sees one's Self as abiding in all beings and all beings in one's own Self. (Gītā 6:29)

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |  
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||*

He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me; I am not separated from him and he is never separated from Me. (Gītā 6:30)

*sarva-bhūta-sthitaṁ yo mām bhajaty-ekatvam-āsthitaḥ |  
sarvathā vartmāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||*

The Yogi who, established in unity, worships Me dwelling in all beings, he abides in Me, howsoever he may live. (Gītā 6:31 )

paśyataḥ sarva bhūtāni sarvāvasthāsu sarvadā |  
brahmabhūtas saṁyogo nāśubhenopapadyate || 14 ||

A person on this level of spiritual realization sees essential sameness everywhere and always, with such a degree of spiritual integration (*samyoga*) one is never engaged in unskilful actions.

*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati |  
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati ||*

He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me; I am not separated from him and he is never separated from Me. (Gītā 6:30)

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sarvathā vartmāno'pi sa yogī mayi vartate ||*

The Yogi who, established in unity, worships Me dwelling in all beings, he abides in Me, howsoever he may live. (Gītā 6:31)

ajñāna mūlātmakaṁ kleśam ativṛttasya mohajam |  
loka vṛtti prakāśena jñāna-mārgeṇa gamyate || 15 ||

When a person has overcome the domination of spiritual nescience (*ajñāna*) from which suffering arises, he turns to spiritual knowledge and follows the path of wisdom.

### Commentary

*Ajñāna* or spiritual nescience is the misidentification of the Self with the mind-body complex – it is rooted in the sense of self (*asmita*). We do not know who we really are and think we are the mind and the body and identify ourselves through our actions, thoughts and accessories – home, family, friends, profession etc. This misidentification is the cause of suffering (*dukha*).

anādi nidhanam jantum ātma yoniṁ sadāvyayam |  
anaupamyam amūrtaṁ ca bhagavān āha buddhimān || 16 ||

The ātma is described by the enlightened beings as consciousness without beginning and without end, self-existent, immutable, incorporeal and incomparable.

tapo mūlam idaṁ sarvaṁ yanmām viprānupṛcchasi |  
indriyāṇyeva saṁnyamya tapo bhavati nānyathā || 17 ||

This realization, O Brahmin, that you have enquired of me is only the result of self-discipline/meditation. And this self-discipline can only be acquired by subduing the senses. It cannot be otherwise.

indriyāṇyeva tat sarvaṁ yat svarga narakāvubhau |  
nigṛhīta viśṛṣṭāni svargāya narakāya ca || 18 ||

The concept of heaven and hell are both dependent on our senses, when one is in control of one's senses then *svarga* is said to exist, lack of control is *naraka*.

### Commentary

*Svarga* is a state of wellbeing and happiness whereas *Naraka* is a state of suffering and grief — these pertain to life here on earth and not necessarily to some post-death state. So it is through our intention and actions we can create these polar states wherever we are.

eśa yoga vidhiḥ kṛtsno yāvad indriya dhāraṇam |  
etan mūlam hi tapasaḥ svargasya narakasya ca || 19 ||

The sustained practice of Yoga leads to the complete subjugation of the senses. This self-control is the genesis of happiness and sorrow.

indriyāṇām prasaṅgena doṣam ārcchantya saṁśayam |  
sanniyamya tu tānyeva tataḥ siddhiṁ samāpnuyāt || 20 ||

Our senses are the root (cause) of our spiritual advancement as also at the root of our spiritual degradation.

śaṅṇāmātmani nityānāmaśvaryaṁ yo'dhitiṣṭhati |  
na sa pāpaiḥ kṛto'narthairyujyate vijitendriyaḥ || 21 ||

When these five senses and the mind are under one's control, one is considered to be a *jitendriya* (self-controlled) and will never engage in vice and consequently corruption has no influence over one.

rathaḥ śarīraṁ puruṣasya dṛṣṭamātmā niyantendriyāṇyāhuraśvān |  
tair apramattaḥ kuśalī sadaśvairdāntaiḥ sukhaṁ yāti rathīva dhīraḥ || 22 ||

The physical body has been compared to a chariot, the *jīvātman* to the charioteer and the senses to horses. A skilled person drives about without confusion, like a quiet charioteer with well-broken horses.

śaṅṇāmātmani yuktānām indriyāṇām pramāthinām |  
yo dhīro dhārayed raśmīn sa syāt parama sārathiḥ || 23 ||

An excellent driver is one who knows how to patiently control the reins of those wild horses — the six senses inherent in our nature.

indriyāṇām prasṛṣṭānām hayānām iva vartmasu |  
dhr̥tiṁ kurvīta sārathye dhr̥tyā tāni jayed dhruvam || 24 ||



When our senses become ungovernable like horses on the high road, we must patiently rein them in; for with patience, we are sure to get the better of them.

indriyāṇāṁ vicaratāṁ yaṁ mano'nuvidhīyate |  
tadaś harate buddhiṁ nāvāṁ vāyur ivāmbhaśi || 25 ||

When the mind is overpowered by any one of these senses running wild, one loses the ability to reason, and becomes like a ship tossed by storms upon the high ocean.

|| śrīḥ ||  
adhyāyaḥ 7



brāhmaṇa uvāca

vṛttvasya rajasāścaiva tamasaśca yathātatham |  
vṛṇāṁś tattvena me brūhi yathāvad iha prcchataḥ || 1 ||

The Brahmin said:— O butcher, I am very curious, please describe to me in detail, the respective characteristics of the guṇas — *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.'

vyādha uvāca

hanta te kathayiśyāmi yaṁ mām tvaṁ pariṇcchasi |  
etāṁ guṇāṁ prthaktvena nibodha gadato mama || 2 ||

The butcher replied:— "Very well, I shall tell you what you have asked. I shall describe separately their respective characteristics, listen up."

mohātmakaṁ tamas teṣāṁ raja eṣāṁ pravartakam |  
prakāśa bahulatvāccha satvaṁ jyāya ihocyate || 3 ||

The *tamas* is characterised by illusion (spiritual), *rajas* incites (to action), and *sattva* is characterised by illumination, and on that account, it is said to be the best of them.

avidyā bahulo mūḍhaḥ svapnaśīlo vicetanaḥ |  
durhṛṣṭikas tamodhyastaḥ sakrodhas tāmaso'lasaḥ || 4 ||

One who has a preponderance of *tamas* is under the influence of spiritual ignorance; foolish, idle, senseless and given to dreaming, unenergetic and swayed by anger and haughtiness.

pravṛtta vākyo mantrī ca yo narāgrya'nasūyakaḥ |  
vidhitsamāno viprarṣe stabdho mānī sa rājasah || 5 ||

And one who is out going, and vocal, skilful in managing others, free from envy, always active, full of hubris and of hot temperament, is said to be under the influence of *rajas*.

prakāśa bahulo dhīro nirvidhitso'nasūyakaḥ |  
akrodhano naro dhīmān dāntaścaiva sa sāttvikaḥ || 6 ||

And one who is wise, patient, has no relish for starting new projects, free from fault-finding, and free from anger, wise and forbearing is said to be under the influence of *sattva*.

sāttvikastvatha sambuddho lokavṛttena kliśyate |  
yadā budhyati boddhavyaṁ lokavṛttaṁ jugupsate || 7 ||

One who is endowed with *sattva*, is full of knowledge and makes little effort to become involved in rajasic and tamasic activities. As knowledge develops into wisdom, the sattvic person becomes more disinterested in materialism.



vairāgyas ca rūpaṁ tu pūrvam eva pravartate |  
mṛdur bhavaty ahaṁkāraḥ prasīdaty ārjavaṁ ca yat || 8 ||

A feeling of indifference to worldly affairs is characteristic of sattvic people. And then feelings of self-importance decrease, and peacefulness and simplicity increase.

tato'sya sarva dvandvāni praśāmyanti parasparam |  
na cāsya saṁśayo nāma kvacid bhavati kaścana || 9 ||

Thereafter attachment and repulsion and all the other pairs of opposites cease to be an influence, and all doubts regarding spirituality are resolved absolutely.

śūdrayonau hi jātasya sadguṇān upatiṣṭhataḥ |  
vaiśyatvaṁ labhate brahman kṣatriyatvaṁ tathaiva ca || 10 ||

A person, O Brahmin, may be born as a commoner, but if possessed of good qualities, one may attain the state of *Vaiśya* and similarly that of a *Kṣatriya*.

ārjave vartamānasya brāhmaṇyamabhiḥjāyate |  
guṇāste kīrtitāḥ sarve kiṁ bhūyaḥ śrotum icchasi || 11 ||

And if one is steadfast in rectitude, one may even become a Brahmin. I have described to you these virtues, what else do you wish to learn?"

### Commentary

There is the social classification according to profession which is the caste system known as *jāti*, and then there is classification of people according to proclivity known as *varṇa*. So for example the *jāti* criteria for a commoner (Sūdra) are:—

*dānaṁ yajño'tha śuśrūṣā dvijātīnāṁ tridhā mayā |*  
*vyākhyātaḥ śūdra dharmo'pi jīvikā kāru-karmajā |*  
*tadvad dvijāti śuśrūṣā poṣaṇam kraya vikrayaiḥ |*

The religious duties of the Sūdra are: works of charity and the performing of yajñas and bhagavad kainkaryam — serving the Lord. They earn a living from being artisans, tradesmen, craftsmen etc., from service professions, from nurturing and from selling and buying. (Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa 25:7-8)

The varṇa (character) – criteria are:—

*dirgha vairam asūyā cāsatyā brāhmaṇa dūṣaṇam |*  
*paīśunyam nirdayatvā ca jānīyācchūdra lakṣaṇam ||*

Bearing long grudges, envy, mendacity, reviling religious people, slander, and ruthlessness — these should be recognized as the characteristics of a Sudra. (Vasishtha 6:24)

Everyone is born as a Śūdra - there is no caste by birth.

*janmanā jāyate śūdras samskārad bhaved dvija |*  
*veda pāṭhād bhaved vipro brahma jānātīti brāhmaṇaḥ ||*

By birth everyone is a sudra, by undergoing the necessary transformative rituals one becomes twice-born – *dvija*, by study of the Vedas one becomes a *vipra* and by knowing the Supreme Truth one becomes a *brāhmaṇa*.

*śṛṇu yakṣa kulam tāta na svadhyāyo na ca śātam |*  
*kāraṇam vā dvijatve ca vṛttam eva na saṁśayaḥ ||*

Listen about caste, Yaksha dear, not study, neither learning is the cause of being "twice-born". Conduct alone is the basis, there is no doubt about it. (Aranya-parva 312. 106.)

*na yonir nāpi saṃskāro na jñānam na ca santatiḥ |  
kāraṇāni dvijatvasya vṛttam eva tu kāraṇam ||*

The cause of brahminhood is not birth, nor sacraments, nor learning nor progeny — good conduct alone is the cause. (Anusasana Parva 143:50)

*satyam, dānam, kṣamā, śīlam anṛṣāmsyam tapo ghṛṇā |  
dṛśyante yatra nāgendra sa brāhmaṇa iti smṛtiḥ ||*

The one in whom are manifest truthfulness, generosity, forbearance, good conduct, absence of malice, austerity and compassion is a *Brāhmaṇa* according to the sacred tradition.

*yatraita lakṣyate sarpa vṛttam sa brāhmaṇas smṛtaḥ |  
yatraitān na bhavet sarvaṃ tam śūdrām iti nirdiśet ||*

One in whom this conduct is manifest is a *Brāhmaṇa*, they should be considered as Sudras in which this code of conduct is absent. (Aranya-parva 180. 20, 27.)

### || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 8



brāhmaṇa uvāca

*pārthivaṃ dhātum āsādyā śārīro'gniḥ katham bhavet |  
avakāśa viśeṣeṇa katham vartayate'nilaḥ || 1 ||*

"The Brahmin said:— 'How does fire (vital force = *prāṇa*) exist in combination with the earthy element (matter), and how does the *prāṇa* move through the *nāḍis* (subtle channels)?

vyādha uvāca

*mūrdhānam āsrito vahniḥ śarīraṃ paripālayan |  
prāṇo mūrdhani cāgnau ca vartamāno viceṣṭate || 2 ||*

The butcher said:— The *udāna* vital force in the form of heat, protects the body, the *prāṇa* exists and operates along side it and both reside in the head<sup>18</sup> and flowing through the body maintain metabolism and life.

*bhūtaṃ bhavyaṃ bhaviṣyaṃ ca sarvaṃ prāṇe pratiṣṭhitam |  
śreṣṭhaṃ tad eva bhūtānāṃ brahma-jyotir upāśmahe || 3 ||*

The past, the present and the future [in all living beings] are inseparably associated with the *prāṇa*. And [respiration] it is the strongest force in all creatures; arising from the Supreme Brahman - and we meditate upon it.

*sa jantuḥ sarva bhūtātmā puruṣaḥ sa sanātanaḥ |  
mano buddhir ahaṃkāro bhūtānāṃ viśayaśca saḥ || 4 ||*

It is the animating principle of all creatures, and it is the eternal *puruṣa* (ātman). It is the mind, intelligence and the *ego*, and it is the subjective locus of the various elements.

### Commentary

There are two principal *tattvas* (factors) in the universe, viz., Mind (*manas* = sentience) and *Prāṇa* (breath). The Mind is inseparable from the Breath. Slow breathing calms the mind and rapid breathing agitates the mind. *Prāṇa* causes the digestion of food, turns it into nutrients which are transported by the blood to the tissues and the brain. The mind is

<sup>18</sup> In the head means that they are dependant on the nostrils and the respiration.

then able to think and do *Brahma-Vicāra* (philosophical enquiry). This is why *prāṇāyama* or breath-regulation is such an important aspect of Yoga practice.

avyaktaṁ sattva saṁjñam ca jīvaḥ kālaḥ sa caiva hi |  
prakṛtiḥ puruṣaścaiva prāṇa eva dvijottama |  
jāgarti svapnakāle ca svapne svapnāyate ca saḥ || 5 ||

Prāṇa is unmanifest, it has the quality of *sattva*, it is life, time, material nature and *puruṣa*. It is active in the awakened state of consciousness (*jāgrata*); and during dreaming (*svapna*) it creates the dream-world and moves about therein.

### Commentary

In the dream state (*svapna-avastha*), the external awareness is shut down. In dream state, the senses are quiet and absorbed in the mind. Mind alone is active during dream. The mind operates in a free and unfettered manner. There is no land, no sea, no cars, no animals in dream; but the mind creates everything out of its own essence, out of the recollection of materials supplied from waking consciousness. The mind itself assumes the various forms of a bee, flower, mountain, vehicle, horse, river, etc. It is the subject and is the object as well. The seer and the seen are one in the dream state.

Every one has their own subjective mental world and dream-creations. The dream-creations are often related to Karmic impressions as well arising from the sub-conscious mind.

jāgratsu balam ādhatte ceṣṭatsu ceṣṭayatyapi || 6 ||  
tasmin nirudde viprendra mṛta ityabhidhīyate |  
tyaktvā śārīraṁ bhūtātmā punar anyat prapadyate || 7 ||

During the waking state one has the capacity to accomplish goals, one is proactive and causes others to act. When the *prāṇa* ceases to operate death occurs. The ātman leaves the body and takes on another.

### Commentary

The individual Self (*jīva*) in the state of 'awakeness' (*jāgrata*) as long as it is in contact with the various external objects. By means of the modifications of the mind the *jīva* apprehends those external objects and identifies itself with the gross body which is also an object of perception.

evam tviha sa sarvatra prāṇena paripālyate |  
prṣṭhatastu samānena svām svām gatim upāśritaḥ || 8 ||

Thus, in this world *prāṇa* is everywhere and supports all life. When it takes the form of *samāna* then it has a different function peculiar to it.

### Commentary

*Samāna vāyu*, or “balancing air,” is the transformation of the *prāṇa* when the *prāṇa vāyu* (the inward/upward-moving), meets the *apāṇa vāyu* (the outward/downward-moving). Located at the navel, *Samāna vāyu* governs *agni*, the digestive fire, or fire of purification. This digestive energy is efficient when *prāṇa* and *apāṇa* unite in *samāna*.

*Samāna* is related to the Manipura chakra located at the solar plexus. It is responsible for the processing and assimilation of all that is taken in — food, emotions, perceptions, and breath. *Samāna* assimilates these energies so that they can be used optimally. An imbalance of *Samāna vāyu* presents as health conditions including digestive disturbances, slow metabolism, malnourishment, or obesity.

basti mūle gudam caiva pāvakaṁ samupāśritaḥ |  
vahan mūtraṁ purīṣaṁ vā'pyapānaḥ parivartate || 9 ||

And then *samāna* transforming itself into *apāna vāyu*, and operating in the urinary system and digestive tract expels the refuse matter of the body; urine and feces.

### Commentary

*Apāna* is the *prāṇa vāyu* that involves the downward and outward flow of energy from the body. *Apāna vāyu* governs the outward flow of energy on the breath, the digestive elimination, and menstruation. The seat of *apāna vāyu* is the *mūladhāra chakra*, or the root chakra located at the perineum and pelvic floor. Not only does *apāna* guide the elimination of physical wastes, but also mental and emotional waste — that which no longer serves us.

The balanced function of *apāna* is important so that we are able to release negative energy, destructive thoughts, and toxins. *Prāṇa* and *apāna* work in a push-pull manner, each helping to balance the other.

*Apāna* is all about release — physical, mental, and emotional release. We must carefully mind what we take into our bodies and mind, we must equally cultivate the proper release of energy from our being.

prayatne karmaṇi bale sa eṣa triṣu vartate |  
udāna iti taṁ prāhur adhyātma-viduṣo janāḥ || 10 ||

That same force is present in the three factors of effort, exertion and power, and in that condition it is called *udāna-vāyu* by persons learned in physical science.

### Commentary

*Udāna-vāyu*, or “ascending air,” is the aspect of the *prāṇa-vāyu* that directs *prāṇa* from lower to upper chakras. *Udāna-vāyu* is the channel that leads from lower to upper levels of consciousness, carrying the energy of *kuṇḍalini* — the dormant energy awakened through yoga practice — up through the chakras as it ascends. It is primarily located between the heart and the head.

As the expressive *vāyu*, *udāna* governs the throat center. Communication and expression are particularly affected by this *vāyu*, as are the thyroid and parathyroid glands, which regulate metabolism. When *udāna* is balanced, we feel confident, assertive, and able to express ourselves articulately. The energy of *udāna* helps us to raise the bar, so to speak—to achieve our highest aspirations.

When *udāna* is out of balance, we find it difficult to communicate effectively. Loss for words, or too many words, or inappropriate speech burden our conversations. We feel unable to reach our ideals and find it difficult to understand those of others. We may feel defeated and unsure of ourselves.

sandhau sandhau saṁniviṣṭaḥ sarveśvapi tathā'nilaḥ |  
śarīreṣu manuṣyāṇāṁ vyāna ityupadiṣṭe || 11 ||

And when manifesting itself by its presence at all the junctional points of the human system, it is known by the name *Vyāna*.

### Commentary

*Vyāna-vāyu*, or “omnipresent air,” is the aspect of *prāṇa-vāyu* that integrates all *vāyus*. *Vyāna-vāyu* helps to balance the other four *vāyus*, and is present throughout the body. It is

not associated with any one area of the body, but rather the entire body, and even extends outward into the area surrounding the body, also known as the aura.

Nourishing and expansive, *vyāna* governs the movement of *prāṇa* through the nadis — the 72,000 energy channels that flow throughout the body. *Vyāna* also dictates the flow of blood and nutrients through the circulatory system, and the flow of chemical and electrical impulses through the nervous system, the movement of fluid through the lymphatic system, the movement of muscles and joints, and even the flow of thoughts and emotions — *vyāna* brings it all together.

dhātuṣvagnistu vitataḥ sa tu vāyu samīritaḥ |  
rasān dhātūmśca doṣānśca vartayan paridhāvati || 12 ||

And the internal heat is diffused throughout all the tissues of our system, and supported by these kinds of *vāyus*, it digests our food and nourishes the tissues (*dhātus*) and the humours of our system.

### Commentary

The seven *dhātus* are the seven tissues of the body. In English they are; plasma, blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow / nerve, and reproductive tissue. In Sanskrit, they are *rasa*, *rakta*, *māmsa*, *medas*, *asthi*, *majja*, and *śukra* respectively. These are the structures that make up the body. However, like most concepts in Vedic literature, they are much more than their one-dimensional definitions. They are integral to understanding the relationships of the tissues in the body, and they are sites that *doṣas* [imbalances] enter when they cause disease. An understanding of the seven *dhātus* is important to understanding pathology; what goes wrong in the body. When a *doṣa* enters a *dhātu*, a proper understanding of the *dhātu* helps the practitioner predict the symptoms that will manifest and provides clues to the best treatment.

prāṇānām sannipātāt tu sannipātaḥ prajāyate |  
ūṣmā cāgnir iti jñeyo yo'nnaṁ pacati dehinām || 13 ||

And by the cooperation of *Prāṇa* and other *vāyus*, a reaction (combination) ensues, and the heat/energy generated thereby is the metabolism which causes the digestion of our food.

samānodānayoṛ madhye prāṇapānau samāhitau |  
samarthitastvadhiṣṭhānaṁ samyak pacati pāvakaḥ || 14 ||

Between the *Prāṇa* and the *Apāna* are the *Samāna* and the *Udāna*. And the heat/energy generated by their cooperation causes the growth of the body (anabolism).

asyāpi pāyupayantas tathā syād guda saṁjñitaḥ |  
srotāṁśi tasmā jāyante sarva prāṇeṣu dehinām || 15 ||

The *vāyu* operating from the navel to the rectum is called *Apāna*; and from that, the *srotas* arise in the bodies of all creatures.

### Commentary

*Srotas*, meaning 'channels', are present throughout the physical body as well as at the “invisible” or subtle level of the cells, molecules, atoms, and subatomic strata.

*Srotas* are present in all living things. These *srotas* convey nutrients, minerals, water, air and even thoughts. A block in the *srotas* is the beginning of diseases. Another definition of health is the unchecked flow of physical elements, thought and knowledge.

Only three *srotas* or channels are recognized by modern medical science they are the *anna-vāha-srota* (the digestive system), *rakta-vāha-srota* (circulatory system) and the *prāṇa-vāha-srota* (respiratory system).

pravṛttā hr̥dayāt sarve tiryag ūrdhvam adhas tathā |  
vahan̄ty anna rasānnāḍyo daśa prāṇa pracoditāḥ || 16 ||

The *nāḍis* issuing from the heart run upwards and downwards, as also in oblique directions; they carry the best essence of our food (*rasa*), and are acted upon by the ten *Prāṇa* airs.

### Commentary

*Rasa dhātu* refers to the primary waters of the body. The word *rasa* means sap, juice, or liquid. In the physical body, *rasa* refers directly to the plasma, or non-cellular portion of the blood; the lymph, and interstitial fluids. As watery secretions, *rasa dhātu* relates indirectly to breast milk and menstrual fluid.

*Rasa* is more than fluid it is nourishment. Sugar and nutrients mix with the plasma and are carried by *vyāna-vāyu* to all of the tissues of the body. As such, when *rasa-dhātu* is healthy, a person feels satiated. The satisfaction one feels is both physical and psychological.

ekādaśa vikārātmā kalāsambhāra sambhṛtaḥ |  
mūrtimantaṁ hi taṁ viddhi nityaṁ yoga jītātmakam || 17 ||

The eternal *jīva* is embodied in this corporeal form, and operates through the eleven indriyas. It is associated with 16 kalas<sup>19</sup> (rays) and through Yoga one can achieve self-control.

devo yaḥ saṁsthitāś tasminn abbindur iva puṣkare |  
kṣetrajñāṁ taṁ vijānīhi nityaṁ tyāga jītātmakam || 18 ||

The divine sentient Self dwells within the body and is different from it like a drop of water on a lotus-leaf. It is always separate therefrom.

jīvātmaṁ vijānīhi rajaḥ satvaṁ tamaś tathā |  
jīvamātma guṇaṁ viddhi tathā"tmānaṁ parātmaṁ || 19 ||

Know that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, are the attributes of all life and that life is the attribute of *ātman*, and that the latter again is an attribute of the *paramātman* (Supreme Being).

mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaś sanātanaḥ |  
manaś ṣaṣṭhān-īndriyāṇi prakṛtiśtathāni karṣati || 7 ||

An everlasting part of Myself, having become the *Jīvātman* in the mortal world, acquires the [five] senses, and the mind which is the sixth, and abides in Prakṛti. (Gītā 15:7)

śarīraṁ yad avāpnoti yaccāpy-utkrāmat-īśvaraḥ |  
gṛhītva itāni saṁyāti vāyur-gandhān ivāśayāt || 8 ||

Whatever body the ruler (*Jīvātman*) acquires and from whatever body it departs, it proceeds, taking with it these sense-faculties as the wind carrying fragrance from their places [in flowers]. (Gītā 15:8)

eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu bhūtātmā saṁprakāśate |  
dṛṣyate tvagryayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā jñāna-vedibhiḥ || 20 ||

<sup>19</sup> *prāṇa* (life-force), *śraddha* (conviction), *ākāśa* (space), *vāyu* (air), *agni* (fire), *jala* (water), *pr̥thivi* (earth) *indriyas* (senses), *manaś* (mind), *anna* (nutrients), *vīrya* (virility), *tapa* (heat), *mantra*, *karma*, *loka* (realm) and *nāma* (names) — see praśnopaniṣad 6:4

In all beings the ātma radiates forth, the intelligent ones are cognisant of this fact through their keen and subtle intellect.

cittasya hi prasādena hanti karma śubhāśubham |  
prasannātmātmani sthitvā sukham anantyaṁ aśnute || 21 ||

Through the purification of the mind, one is able to erase the good and evil effect of Karma and attains abiding happiness here and eternal beatitude (*mokṣa*) later.

lakṣaṇaṁ tu prasādasya yathā tṛptaḥ sukhaṁ svapet |  
nivāte vā yathā dīpo dīpyet kuśala dīpitaḥ || 22 ||

That state of peace and purification of mind is likened to the state of a person who in a cheerful state of mind sleeps soundly, or the brilliance of a lamp trimmed by a skillful hand.

pūrva rātre pare caiva yuñjānaḥ satataṁ manaḥ |  
laghvāhāro viśuddhātmā paśyannātmānam ātmani || 23 ||

A person should live on a moderate diet and practice the purification of the mind. One should meditate on the Self within in the early morning and evening.

*nāty-aśnatas-tu yogo'sti na caikāntam-anaśnataḥ |  
na cāti svapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna ||*

Yoga is not for one who over-eats, nor for one who fasts excessively; nor for one who sleeps too much, nor for one who stays awake for lengthy periods, O Arjuna. (Gītā 6:16)

*yuktāhāra vihārasya yukta ceṣṭasya karmasu |  
yukta svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥsvahā ||*

Yoga becomes the destroyer of sorrow for one who is moderate in food and recreation, who is temperate in actions, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness. (Gītā 6:17)

pradīpteneva dīpena manodīpena paśyati |  
dṛṣṭvā "tmānaṁ nirātmānaṁ sa tadā vipramucyate || 24 ||

One who constantly practises concentration of mind soon beholds the Supreme Being which has no attributes, like a shining dazzling lamp (dispelling darkness).

### Commentary

*Has no attributes* — the term used is *nirātmānam* — which means not having a "selfness". It is difficult to imagine what exactly the butcher meant by this. The two possible interpretations are that he is talking of the *Nirguṇa Brahman* — the Supreme Truth as devoid of all qualifications or it could also mean that the Supreme Reality Brahman does not conform to our personal and limited conception of what Brahman actually is. We like to give a "personality" to the Supreme Being — but that personality can never be limited to our common definition and understanding of personality.

*yuñjann-evaṁ sadā'tmānaṁ yogī niyata-mānasaḥ |  
śāntiṁ nirvāṇa paramāṁ mat-saṁsthāṁ adhigacchati ||*

Applying the mind constantly in this way, the Yogi, with a controlled mind, attains the peace which is the summit of beatitude and which abides in Me forever. (Gītā 6:15)

sarvopāyaistu lobhas krodhasya ca vinigrahaḥ |  
etat pavitraṁ lokānaṁ tapo vai saṁkramo mataḥ || 25 ||



Avarice and anger must be subdued by all means, for this constitutes the purification of the world and is the means by which one can cross over to the other side of this sea of affliction.

nityaṁ krodhāt tapo rakṣeṇ chriyaṁ rakṣeṇ matsarāt |  
vidyāṁ mānāpamānābhyāṁ ātmānaṁ tu pramādataḥ || 26 ||

One must protect one's spiritual practice from anger, and protect one's wealth from jealousy, one's learning from the effects of vanity, and one's self from negligence.

ānṛṣaṁsyaṁ paro dharmāḥ kṣamā ca paramaṁ balam |  
ātmajñānaṁ paraṁ jñānaṁ paraṁ satya vrata vratam || 27 ||

Compassion is the supreme Dharma, and forgiveness is strongest spiritual force, the knowledge of the Self is the best of all learning, and truthfulness is the best of all religious vows.

satyasya vacanaṁ śreyaḥ satyaṁ jñānaṁ hitaṁ bhavet |  
yad būta-hitaṁ atyantam tad vai satyaṁ paraṁ matam || 28 ||

The telling of truth is good, and the knowledge of truth may also be good, but that which conduces to the greatest good of all beings, is known as the highest truth.

*karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ |  
loka saṅgraham-evāpi saṁpaśyan kartum arhasi ||*

Verily, by Karma Yoga alone did Janaka and others reach perfection. Indeed, you should act, bearing in mind the welfare of the world. Gītā 3:20

*saṁniyam endriya-grāmaṁ sarvatra sama-buddhayaḥ |  
te prāpnuvanti mām-eva sarva-bhūta-hite-ratāḥ ||*

Having subdued all their senses, unprejudiced, intent on the welfare of all beings — they too come to Me alone. Gītā 12:4

yas sarve samārambhā nirāśīr bandhanāḥ sadā |  
tyāge yasya hutaṁ sarvaṁ sa tyāgī sa ca buddhimān || 29 ||

One whose actions are performed without the object of securing any personal reward, who has sacrificed all into the fire of renunciation, is a real *Sannyāsin* and is really wise.

yato na gurutām cainaṁ śrāvayed upapādayan |  
taṁ vidyād brāhmaṇo yogam ayogaṁ yoga saṁjñitam || 30 ||

Therefore one should decrease one's attachment to the physical world. This non-attachment (*ayoga*) is called unification (*yoga*). This knowledge of unification with the Supreme consciousness should not be taught to unsuitable aspirants.

*idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana |  
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṁ na ca mām yo'bhyasūyasi ||*

This teaching you should never reveal to one who is devoid of self-discipline and devotion, nor to one who has no desire to listen, nor certainly to one who traduces Me. Gītā 18:67

na hiṁsyāt sarva bhūtāni maitrāyaṇagataś-careṭ |  
nedaṁ jīvitam āsādya vairaṁ kurvīta kenacit || 31 ||



We must not harm any living creature, and we must live on terms of friendliness with all, and in this hard to obtain human birth<sup>20</sup>, we must not allow enmity to develop with anyone.

ākiñcanyam susaṁtoṣo nirāśitvam acāpalam |  
etad eva param jñānam sadātmajñānam uttamam || 32 ||

Not depending on any other, cultivating tranquility in all situations, renunciation of hope and inconsiderate conduct — these are the ways by which spiritual insight can always be secured; and the knowledge of the Self (one's own spiritual nature) is the best of all knowledge.

### Commentary.

Not depending on any other (*ākiñcanyam*) has a twofold reference.

(a) Self-effort – making the effort to improve oneself by one's own effort.

*uddhared-ātman-ātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet |*  
*ātmaiva hy-ātmano bandhur-ātmaiva ripur-ātmanaḥ ||*

One should raise one's Self by one's own mind and not allow one's Self to sink; for the mind alone is the friend of the Self, and the mind alone is the adversary of the Self. Gītā 6:5

Rāmānuja comments:— By the Self (*ātman*), that is, by the mind which is unattached to sense-objects, one should raise one's self. One should not allow one's mind which is inclined to sense gratification to drag one down. Friends and enemies exist in the mind alone.

(b) Relying on the Lord — surrendering the burden of Liberation.

*sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja |*  
*ahaṁ tvā sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ ||*

"Completely relinquishing all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I will release you from the effect of all sins, grieve not." Gītā 18:66

parigrahaṁ parityajya bhaved buddhyā yata-vrataḥ |  
aśokaṁ sthānam āśritya niścalaṁ pretya ceha ca || 33 ||

Renouncing all worldly desires and assuming a stoic indifference [to the pairs of opposites], people practice self-control with the aid of their intelligence — thereby all suffering ceases in this world as well as hereafter.

tapo nityena dāntena muninā saṁyatātmanā |  
ajitaṁ jetu kāmēna bhāvyaṁ saṅgeśvasaṅginā || 34 ||

The *muni* who desires to obtain *moksha* (Liberation), which is very difficult to attain, must be constant in austerities, forbearing, self-restrained, and must give up that craving and attachment which binds him to the things of this earth.

guṇāguṇa manāsaṅgam ekakāryam anantaram |  
etat tad brahmaṇo vṛttam āhur eka padaṁ sukham || 35 ||

One who has transcended the *guṇas* while embodied, and lives without attachment who is guided by the *antaryāmi* (the higher self) alone, who is free from nescience and has realised the Truth abides in true joy.

*sama duḥkha sukhaḥ svasthaḥ sama loṣṭāśma kāñcanaḥ |*  
*tulya priyāpriyo dhīras-tulya nindātma saṁstutiḥ || 24 ||*

<sup>20</sup>. The human birth is obtained only after 8,400,000 births in lower species

*mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāri pakṣayoḥ |  
sarvārambha parityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate || 25 ||*

One who is poised in pleasure and pain, who focuses within, to whom a clod, a stone and piece of gold are of equal value, who remains the same towards the pleasant and the unpleasant and who is intelligent, and regards both censure and praise of himself as equal; one who is the same in honour and dishonour, and the same to friend and foe, and who has abandoned all enterprises — such a person is said to have transcended the Gunas. Gītā 14: 24, 25

parityajati yo duḥkhaṁ sukhaṁ cāpyubhayaṁ naraḥ |  
brahma prāpnoti sotyantamāsaṅgaṁ ca na gacchati || 36 ||

By renouncing the objects of both pleasure and pain and by abandoning emotional attachment to material things, one may attain Brahman (Supreme Being or Liberation).

yathā śrutam idaṁ sarvaṁ samāsenā dvijottama |  
etat te sarvaṁ ākhyātāṁ kiṁ bhūyaḥ śrotum icchasi || 37 ||

O good Brahmin, I have now briefly explained to you all this, as I myself have heard it. Now what else do you wish to know?"

### || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 9



brāhmaṇa uvāca

nyāya yuktam idaṁ sarvaṁ bhavatā parikīrtitam |  
na te'styaviditaṁ kiñcid dharmeṣviha hi dṛśyate || 1 ||

The Brahmin said:— "All this that you have explained, is rational, and it seems to me that there is nothing in connection with the mysteries of Dharma which you do not know."

vyādha uvāca

pratyakṣaṁ mama yo dharmastaṁ ca paśya dvijottama |  
yena siddhir iyaṁ prāptā mayā brāhmaṇa puṅgava || 2 ||

The butcher replied:— "O great Brahmin, I shall reveal to you directly, all the virtue that I lay claim to, and by reason of which I have attained this blissful state.

uttiṣṭha bhagavan kṣipraṁ praviśyābhyantaram gṛhaṁ |  
draṣṭum arhasi dharmajña mātaram pitaram ca me || 3 ||

Rise, venerable sir, and quickly enter this inner apartment. I would like to introduce you to my father and my mother."

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

ityuktaḥ sa praviśyātha dadarśa paramārcitam |  
saudhaṁ hr̥dyaṁ catuḥśālam atīva ca manoramam || 4 ||

Markandeya continued:— "Thus addressed, the Brahmin followed him in, and beheld a fine beautiful mansion. It was a magnificent house divided in four suites of rooms.

devatā gṛha saṁkāśa daivataiśca supūjitam |  
śayanāsana sambādhaṁ gandhaiśca paramair yutam || 5 ||

It was admired by gods and looked like one of their palaces; it was also furnished with seats and beds, and redolent of excellent perfumes.

tatra śuklāmbāradharau pitarāvasya pūjītau |  
kṛtāhārau tu saṁtuṣṭāv upaviṣṭau varāsane || 6 ||

He regularly revered both his parents who were clad in white robes. Having finished their meals, they were seated contentedly at ease.

tasya vyādhasya pitarau brāhmaṇaḥ saṁdadarśa ha |  
dharmavyādhasu tau dṛṣṭvā pādeśu śīrasā'patat || 7 ||

The butcher, Dharmavyādha on seeing them, prostrated himself before them on the ground with his head touching their feet.

vṛddhāvūcatuḥ

uttiṣṭhottīṣṭha dharmajña dharmastvām abhirakṣatu |  
prītau svastava śaucena dīrgham āyuravāpnuhi |  
gatimiṣṭām tapo jñānaṁ medhām ca paramām gataḥ || 8 ||

His aged parents then addressed him thus:— "Arise, O pious man, arise, may Dharma protect you; we are much pleased with you; may you be blessed with a long life, and with knowledge, high intelligence, and ultimate liberation.

sat putreṇa tvayā putra nityaṁ kāle supūjītau |  
sukham eva vasāvo'tra deva loka gatāviva || 9 ||

You are a good and dutiful son, for, we are constantly and reasonably looked after by you, we are living very happily in this house – it's as if we had reached the heaven of Indra.

na te'nyad daivataṁ kiñcid daivateśvapi vartate |  
prayatatvād dvijātīnāṁ damenāsi samānavitaḥ || 10 ||

You have never worshipped any other divinity amongst the celestials. You regard us alone as your deities<sup>21</sup>. By constantly subduing yourself, you have become endowed with the self-restraining power of Brahmins.

pitūḥ pitāmahā ye ca tathaiva prapitāmahāḥ |  
prītāste satataṁ putra damenāvāṁ ca pūjayā || 11 ||

All your grandfathers, great grandfathers and ancestors are constantly pleased with you for your self-restraining virtues and for your piety towards us.

manasā karmaṇā vācā śuśrūṣā naiva hīyate |  
na cānyā hi tathā buddhirdṛṣyate sāmprataraṁ tava || 12 ||

In thought, word or deed your attention to us never fails, and it seems that at present you have no other thought in your mind [save as to how to please us].

jāmadagnyena rāmeṇa yathā vṛddhau supūjītau |  
tathā tvayā kṛtaṁ sarvaṁ tad viśiṣṭaṁ ca putraka || 13 ||

Just as [Parashu]-Rama, the son of Jamadagni, worked hard to please his aged parents, so have you, O Son, done to please us, and even so much more.

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

tatas taṁ brāhmaṇaṁ tābhyāṁ dharmavyādho nyavedayat |  
tau svāgatena taṁ vipram arcayāmāsa tus tadā || 14 ||

<sup>21</sup> *mātru devo bhava pitru devo bhava* — Let your mother be your deity, let your father be your deity (Taittiriya Upaniṣad)

Then the butcher introduced the Brahmin to his parents and they received him with the usual salutation of welcome with great respect.

pratipūjya tām pūjām dvijaḥ papraccha tāvubhau |  
saputrābhyām sabhṛtyābhyām kaccid vām kuśalaṁ gr̥he |  
anāmayaṁ ca vām kaccit sadaiveha śarīrayoḥ || 15 ||

The Brahmin accepting their worship with gratitude, enquired if they, with their children and servants, were all well, and if they were always enjoying good health at that time (of life).

vṛddhāvūcatuḥ  
kuśalaṁ nau gr̥he vipra bhr̥tyavarge ca sarvaśaḥ |  
kaccit tvam apyavighnena saṁprāpto bhagavanniti || 16 ||

The aged couple replied:– "At home, O priest, we are all very well, along with all our servants. Have you, adorable sir, arrived here without any difficulty?"

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca  
bāḍham ityeva tau vipraḥ pratyuvāca mudānvitaḥ |  
dharmavyādho nirīkṣyātha tatas taṁ vākyam abravīt || 17 ||

Markandeya continued:– The Brahmin answered in the affirmative. Then the butcher addressing himself to the Brahmin said to him:–

vyādha uvāca  
pitā mātā ca bhagavann etau me daivataṁ param |  
yad daivatebhyaḥ kartavyaṁ tad etābhyām karomyaham || 18 ||

"These my parents, venerable sir, are the deities that I worship; whatever offerings are due to the gods, I offer unto them.

trayastrīṁśad yathā devāḥ sarve śakra purogamāḥ |  
saṁpūjyāḥ sarv alokasya tathā vṛddhāvimau mama || 19 ||

As the thirty-three gods<sup>22</sup> with Indra at their head are worshipped by devotees, so are these aged parents of mine worshipped by me.

upāhārānāharanto devatānām yathā dvijaḥ |  
kurvanti tad vad etābhyām karomy-aham atandritaḥ || 20 ||

As Brahmins exert themselves for the purpose of procuring offerings for their gods, so do I act with diligence for these two (deities of mine).

etau me paramaṁ brahman pitā mātā ca daivatam |  
etau puṣpaiḥ phalair annais toṣayāmi sadā dvija || 21 ||

These my father and mother, O Brahmin, are my supreme deities, and I seek to please them always with offerings of flowers, fruits and food.

etāv evāgnayo mahyaṁ yān vadanti manīṣiṇaḥ |  
yajñā vedāśca catvāraḥ sarvam etau mama dvija || 22 ||

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<sup>22</sup> There are 33 devas who help the Supreme Lord to rule the universe. According to Vedic Tradition only these thirty-three gods may receive offerings. Although there are many other inhabitants of heaven who deserve praise and veneration, they do not have the full status of gods and therefore may not be offered sacrifices. The Thirty Three Gods are comprised of Prajapati, Indra, 8 Vasus, 12 Adityas, and 11 Rudras.

To me they are like the three sacred fires mentioned by the learned; and they are to me as good as yajñas and the four *Vedas*.

etad arthaṁ mama prāṇā bhāryā putraḥ suhrjjanah |  
saputradāraḥ śuśrūṣāṁ nityam eva karomyaham || 23 ||

My very life-force, my wife and children and friends are all for them [dedicated to their service]. And along with my wife and children I always attend on them.

svayaṁ ca snāpayāmy etau tathā pādau pradhāvaye |  
āhāraṁ ca prayacchāmi svayaṁ dvijasattama || 24 ||

O good Brahmin, with my own hands I assist them in bathing and also wash their feet and I myself serve them their meals.

anukūlāḥ kathā vacmi vipriyaṁ parivarjaye |  
adharmeṇāpi saṁyuktaṁ priyamābhyāṁ karomyaham || 25 ||

I say to them only what is agreeable, leaving out what is unpleasant. I consider it to be my highest duty to do what is agreeable to them even though it be not strictly justifiable.

pañcaiva guravo brahman puruṣasya bubhūṣataḥ |  
pitā mātā'gnirātmā ca guruśca dvijasattama || 26 ||

There are five gurus, O Brahmin that are worthy of the highest reverence from a person who seeks progress; the two parents, the sacred fire, the Self and the spiritual preceptor.

eteṣu yas tu varteta samyag eva dvijottama |  
bhaveyur aprayastena paricīṇāstu nityaśaḥ |  
gārhashtye vartamānasya eṣa dharmāḥ sanātanaḥ || 27 ||

By serving them with due dilligence, one acquires the merit of perpetually keeping up the sacred *gārhapatya* fire<sup>23</sup>. And it is the eternal and invariable duty of all householders."

## || śrīḥ || adhyāyaḥ 10



vyādha uvāca

pravṛtta cakṣurjāto'smi sampaśya tapaso balam |  
yadartha mukto'si tayā gaccha tvaṁ mithilām iti || 1 ||  
patiśuśrūṣaparayā dāntayā satyaśīlayā |  
mithilāyāṁ vasanvyādhaḥ sa te dharmāṁpravakṣyati || 2 ||

The service of my parents is my spiritual practice (*tapasya*). Notice the power of this practice of mine, by which I have achieved clairvoyance. This is the reason why I know that you were told by that self-restrained, truthful lady, devoted to her husband, that you should come to Mithila to meet me so that I could explain to you, the mysteries of Dharma.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

pativratāyāḥ satyāyāḥ śīlādhyāyā yatavrata |  
saṁsmṛtya vākyāṁ dharmajña guṇavānāsi me mataḥ || 3 ||

<sup>23</sup> *Gārhapatya* fire is the fire of the home hearth that is established at the time of marriage in the canopy and is brought home. It is kept perpetually burning and oblations are made every morning and evening.

The Brahmin said:– "O pious one, so constant in fulfilling you religious obligations, reflecting on what that truthful good-natured lady said, I am convinced that you are truly endowed with every exceptional quality.

vyādha uvāca

tvad anugraha buddhyā tu vipraitad darśitam mayā |  
vākyaṁ ca śṛṇu me tāta yatte vakṣye hitaṁ dvija || 4 ||

Out of compassion I have explained all this to you. And now, good sir, listen to me as I explain what I think is beneficial for you.

tvayā na pūjitā mātā pitā ca dvijasattama |  
anirṣṭo'si niṣkrānto grhāt tābhyām aninadita || 5 ||

O good Brahmin, you have done the wrong thing by your parents, for you left home without their permission, for the purpose of studying the *Vedas*.

vedoccāraṇa kāryārtham ayuktaṁ tat tvayā kṛtam |  
tava śokena vṛddhau tāv-andhībhūtau tapasvinau || 6 ||

You have not acted properly in this matter, for your ascetic and aged parents have become entirely blind from grief at your absence.

tau prasādayitum gaccha mā tvāṁ dharmo'tyagād ayam |  
tapasvī tvaṁ mahātmā ca dharme ca nirataḥ sadā || 7 ||

Please return home to console them. May you never abandon this supreme duty. You are noble-minded, have ascetic merit, and are completely devoted to your Dharma.

sarvam etad apārthaṁ te kṣipraṁ tau saṁprasādaya |  
śraddadhasva mama brahmannānyathā kartum arhasi |  
gamyatām adya viprarśe śreyas te kathayāmyaham || 8 ||

But all these virtues are wasted by not pleasing your parents. So go quickly without delay Brahmin and console them. Pay attention to what I am saying to you in sincerity. I tell you what is good for you, O Brahmin, return home this very day."

brāhmaṇa uvāca

yad etad uktaṁ bhavatā sarvaṁ satyam asaṁśayam |  
prīto'smi tava bhadraṁ te dharmācāra guṇānvita || 9 ||

The Brahmin replied:– "All that you have said is undoubtedly true; I am extremely happy with you and I wish you all the best."

ihāham āgato diṣṭyā diṣṭyā me saṅgataṁ tvayā |  
īdrṣā durlabhā loke narā dharmā pradarśakāḥ || 10 ||  
eko nara sahasreṣu dharmavān vidyate na vā |  
prīto'smi tava satyena bhadraṁ te puruṣarṣabha || 11 ||

By a stroke of singular good luck have I arrived here, and by a similar stroke of good luck have I come in contact with you. It is extremely rare to discover, in our midst, a person who can so well expound the mysteries of Dharma; there is scarcely one among thousands, who is so well versed in the science of Dharma.

mātāpitṛbhyāṁ śuśrūṣāṁ kariṣye vacanāt tava |  
nākṛtātmā vedayati dharmādharma viniścayam || 12 ||

Acting on your advice, I shall return home and take care of my father and my mother; for one with an impure heart could never expound the mysteries of merit and demerit [as you have done].

durjñeyah śāśvato dharmah sūdra-yonau hi vartatā |  
na tvāṁ sūdrām ahaṁ manye bhavitavyaṁ hi kāraṇam || 13 ||

As it is very difficult for a person born as a Sudra to learn the profound mysteries of the eternal Dharma, I definitely do not consider you to be a Sudra. There must surely be some mystery in connection with this matter.

yena karma viśeṣeṇa prāpteyaṁ sūdratā tvayā |  
etām iccāmi vijñātum tattvena tava sūdratām |  
kāmayānas me śaṁsa sarvaṁ tvaṁ prayatātmavān || 14 ||

You must have attained the Sudra's estate by reason of the fruition of yours own past karma. O magnanimous one, I long to know the truth about this matter. Please reveal this mystery if you don't mind."

vyādha uvāca

ahaṁ hi brāhmaṇah pūrvam āsaṁ dvijavarātmajaḥ |  
vedādhyāyī sukušalo vedāṅgānāṁ ca pāragah |  
ātma doṣa kṛtair brahman navasthām āptavān imām || 15 ||

The butcher replied:– "I was in my former life a Brahmin, well-read in the Vedas, and an accomplished student of all the Vedāṅgas<sup>24</sup>. Through my own fault I have been degraded to my present state as a butcher.

kaścid rājā mama sakhā dhanur ved aparāyaṇah |  
saṁsargād dhanuṣi śreṣṭhas tato'ham abhavaṁ dvija || 16 ||  
etasmin eva kāle tu mṛgayāṁ nirgato nṛpaḥ |  
rahito yodha mukhyaś mantribhiḥ sa saṁvṛtaḥ |  
tato'bhyahan mṛgāṁs tatra subahūnāśramam prati || 17 ||

A certain king, accomplished in the science of *dhanur-veda* (science of archery), was my friend; and from his companionship, O Brahmin, I, too became skilled in archery. Then one day the king and I, in company with his ministers and the best warriors, went out on a hunting expedition. They killed many animals near an ashram of a certain rishi named Subāhu.

atha kṣiptaḥ śaro ghorō mayāpi dvijasattama |  
tāḍitaśca ṛṣistana śareṇā nataparvaṇā || 18 ||

Afterwards I too shot a very powerfull arrow, but my aim was faulty and the rishi was wounded thereby.

bhūmau nipatito brahman uvāca pratinādayan |  
nāparādhyāmy ahaṁ kiñcit kena pāpam idaṁ kṛtam || 19 ||

He fell down upon the ground, and screaming loudly said, "I have harmed no one, what wicked man has done this to me?"

manvānas taṁ mṛgaṁ cāhaṁ saṁprāptaḥ sahasā munim |  
apaśyaṁ taṁ ṛṣiṁ viddhaṁ śareṇā nataparvaṇā || 20 ||

<sup>24</sup> The six Vedāṅgas or 'Limbs of the Vedas' are:— **1. Śikṣā** – Phonetics, **4. Nirukta** – Etymology of words, **2. Chandas** – Prosody, **5. Jyotiṣa** – Astronomy/Astrology, **3. Vyākaraṇa** – Grammar, **6. Kalpa** – Ritual treatises.



And, my lord, I had mistakenly assumed that he was a deer, I went up to him and found that he was pierced through the body by my arrow.

akārya karaṇāccāpi bhṛśaṁ me vyathitaṁ manaḥ |  
tam ugra tapasaṁ vipraṁ niṣṭanantaṁ mahītale || 21 ||

This avoidable crime should never have been committed and I was consumed with remorse. That highly spiritually advanced sage was writhing on the ground in agony.

ajānatā kṛtaṁ idaṁ mayety ahamathābruvam |  
kṣantum arhasi me sarva miti cokto mayā muniḥ || 22 ||

I immediately begged his pardon, "O revered sir, I have committed this crime unwittingly, I beg your forgiveness. If you think it proper, pardon me this transgression."

tataḥ pratyabravīd vākyaṁ ṛṣir māṁ krodha mūrcchitaḥ |  
vyādhas tvaṁ bhavitā krūra śūdra yonāviti dvija || 23 ||

But, hearing my apologies, the *rishi*, whipping himself into a rage, cursed me saying:– "You will be born as a cruel butcher is the Sudra caste [because of what you have done!]"

vyādha uvāca

evaṁ śapto'hamṛṣiṇā tadā dvijabarottama |  
ahaṁ prāsād ayam ṛṣiṁ girā vākya-viśāradam || 24 ||  
ajānatā mayā'kāryam idam adya kṛtaṁ mune |  
kṣantum arhasi tat sarvaṁ prasīda bhagavanniti || 25 ||

The butcher continued:– "Thus cursed by that *rishi*, I tried to propitiate him by saying:– O venerable sir please protect me! Pardon me, O muni, today I have committed this wicked crime unwittingly. I beg you to forgive me, please be compassionate to me." The rishi was somewhat pacified.

ṛṣir uvāca

nānyathā bhavitā śāpa evam etad asaṁśayam |  
ānṛṣaṁsyāt tvahaṁ kiñcit kartā'nugraham adya te || 26 ||

The rishi replied:– "The curse that I have pronounced can never be invalidated, this is certain. But from compassion towards you, I shall do you a favour.

śūdrayonyāṁ vartamāno dharmajño hi bhaviṣyasi |  
mātāpitroś śuśrūṣāṁ kariṣyasi na saṁśayaḥ || 27 ||

Though born as a Sudra you shall nevertheless remain fully cognisant of Dharma and you shall undoubtedly serve your parents.

tayoḥ śuśrūṣayā siddhiṁ mahatīm samavāpsyasi |  
jātismaraś bhavitā svargaṁ caiva gamiṣyasi || 28 ||

And by your devoted service to them you shall attain great spiritual perfection. You shall also have free recollection of your past lives and shalt go to the heavenly realms [after death].

śāpakṣaye tu nirvṛtte bhavitā'si punar dvijaḥ |  
prasādaśca kṛtastena mamaiva dvipadāmvara || 29 ||

On the expiation of this curse, you shall again become a Brahmin". O best of men, thus, in ancient times I was cursed by that rishi of severe power, and also received his blessing.

śaraṁ coddhṛtavān asmi tasya vai dvijasattama |  
āśramaṁ ca mayā nīto na ca prāṇair vyayujyata || 30 ||

Then, I extricated the arrow from his body, and carried him into the hermitage, but he was not fatally wounded and in due time recovered.

brāhmaṇa uvāca

duṣkaraṁ hi kṛtaṁ karma jānatā jātim ātmanaḥ |  
loka vṛttānta tattvajña nityaṁ dharma parāyaṇa || 31 ||

The Brahmin said:– "In accordance with the conventions of your tribe you have followed this odious profession, but you are always devoted to Dharma and well versed in the ways and mysteries of the world.

sāṁprataṁ ca mato me'si brāhmaṇo nātra saṁśayaḥ |  
brāhmaṇaḥ patanīyeṣu vartamāno vikarmasu |  
dāmbhiko duṣkṛtaḥ prāyaḥ śūdreṇa sadṛṣo bhavet || 32 ||

But even now itself, I consider you to be a Brahmin, there is no doubt about this. For the Brahmin who is vain and haughty, who is addicted to vices and dishonourable and degrading practices, is like a Sudra.

yas tu śūdro dame satye dharme ca satatottithaḥ |  
taṁ brāhmaṇam ahaṁ manye vṛttena hi bhaved dvijaḥ || 33 ||

On the other hand, I consider a Sudra who is always adorned with these virtues — rectitude, self-restraint and truthfulness — as a Brahmin.

### Commentary

*yasya yallakṣaṇā proktā pūso varṇābhi vyañjakam |  
yad anyatrāpi drśyeta tat tenaiva vinirdīśet ||*

If the qualities pertaining to a certain caste are seen in another caste, then the latter are to be classified as belonging to the former. (Bhagavatam Sk. 7; Adhy. 11; 35.)

*karmabhiḥ śucibhir devī śuddhātmā vijitendriyaḥ |  
śūdro-pi dvijavat seva iti brahmābravīt svayam ||*

Even a sudra O Devi that has purified himself by good deeds and has subjugated his senses should be served like a twice-born person, this has been declared by Brahma himself. (Anusasana Parva 143:48)

karmadoṣeṇa viśamāṁ gatimāpnōi dāruṇāṁ |  
kṣīṇadoṣam ahaṁ manye cābhitastvāṁ narottama || 35 ||

It is due to one's negative Karma alone that one is born in disagreeable circumstances but I believe that the negative Karma in you has now been depleted."

vyādha uvāca

prajñayā mānasam duḥkham hanyāccārāmauśadhaiḥ |  
etad vijñāna sāmartyaṁ na bālais samatāmiyāt || 36 ||

The butcher replied:– "The ailments of the body should be cured with medicines, and the mental ones with spiritual knowledge. This is the power of knowledge.

aniṣṭa saṁprayogāccha viprayogāt prayisya ca |  
manuṣyā mānasair duḥkhair yujyante cālpa buddhayaḥ || 37 ||

Ignorant people are overpowered with grief at the experience of something which is disagreeable to them, or separation/deprivation from something which is good or much desired.

guṇairbhūtāni yujyante viyujyante tathaiva ca |  
sarvāṇi naitadekasya śokasthānaṁ hi vidyate || 38 ||

The three gunas function according to their natures causing conjunction and disjunction. Indeed, all creatures are subject to grief and joy. It is not merely a single creature or class of existence that is subject to misery.

aniṣṭanānvitaṁ paśyaṁs tathā kṣipraṁ virajyate |  
tataśca pratikurvanti yadi paśyanty upakramam || 39 ||

When creatures encounter anything disagreeable they quickly resile, and if at the commencement of a project they anticipate problems then they will take means to prevent it happening.

śocato na bhavet kiñcit kevalaṁ paritapyate |  
parityajanti ye duḥkhaṁ sukhaṁ vā'pyubhayaṁ narāḥ || 40 ||

Simply grieving over a loss is unproductive. Remorse can be productive [of change]. Those wise people who are indifferent to both happiness (gain) and misery (loss), are really content.

ta eva sukham edhante jñāna-ṭṛptā manīśiṇaḥ |  
asaṁtośaparā mūḍhāḥ saṁtośaṁ yānti paṇḍitāḥ || 41 ||

The wise that are very insightful are always contented and the foolish always discontented and attached to their state. The wise purposefully pursue contentment.

asaṁtośasya nāsty antas tuṣṭistu paramaṁ sukham |  
na śocanti gatādhvānaḥ paśyantaḥ paramāṁ gatim || 42 ||

There is no end to discontentment, and contentment is the highest achievement. People who have reached the perfect way, do not grieve, they are always mindful of the highest goal.

na viṣāde manaḥ kāryaṁ viṣādo viṣam-uttamam |  
mārayatya kṛta prajñāṁ bālaṁ kruddha ivoragaḥ || 43 ||

One must not give way to discontent<sup>25</sup> for it is like a virulent poison. It kills those lacking insight, just as child is killed by an enraged snake.

avaśyaṁ kriyamāṇas karmaṇo dṛśyate phalam |  
na hi nirvedam āgamyā kiñcit prāpnoti śobhanam || 44 ||

Our actions are surely followed by their consequences. Whoever merely gives way to despair [for worldly affairs] can never accomplish any good.

athāpyupāyaṁ paśyeta duḥkhas parimokṣaṇe |  
aśocan nārabhetaivaṁ muktaścāvyasanī bhavet || 45 ||

One should strive to be liberated from suffering. Instead of despair and grumbling one must become proactive and find the way to freedom from suffering.

bhūteśvabhāvaṁ sañcintya ye tu buddheḥ paraṁ gatāḥ |  
na śocanti kṛta prajñāḥ paśyantaḥ paramāṁ gatim || 46 ||

Everything in samsara is instable and impermanent. Once this is truly realised one will attain the highest state of wisdom — freedom from suffering and unification with the Divine.

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<sup>25</sup> *Vishada* is the original. It means discontent, but here it means more a mixture of discontent, perplexity and confusion than mere discontent.

na śocāmi ca vai vidvan kālākāṅkṣī sthitosmyaham |  
etair nidarśanair brahman nāvasīdāmi sattama || 47 ||

I too, O learned man, do not give way to grief; I stay here [in this life] biding my time. For all these afore mentioned reasons I experience no grief or lack of motivation."

brāhmaṇa uvāca

āpr̥cche tvām svasti te'stu dharman tvām parirakṣatu |  
apramādas tu kartavyo dharme dharmabhṛtāmvara || 48 ||

The Brahmin said;— "I now request your permission to depart, O best of the upholders of Dharma, may you be prosperous, and may Dharma protect you, and may you continue to be assiduous in the practice of Dharma."

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

bāḍham ityeva taṁ vyādhaḥ kṛtāñjalir uvāca ha |  
pradakṣiṇam atho kṛtvā prasthito dvijasattamaḥ || 49 ||

Markandeya continued:— The butcher said to him, "So be it". And the good Brahmin walked round him<sup>26</sup> and then departed.

sa tu gatvā dvijaḥ sarvām śuśrūṣām kṛtavāns tadā |  
mātāpitṛbhyām andhābhyām yathānyāyām suśamsitaḥ || 50 ||

The Brahmin returning home began to diligently serve his old parents who were both blind. Being overjoyed they praised him enthusiastically.

etat te sarvam ākhyātām nikhilena yudhiṣṭhira |  
prṣṭavānasi yaṁ tāta dharmam dharmabhṛtāmvara || 51 ||

I have thus, O good Yudhishtira, narrated to you in great detail, this anecdote full of moral instruction, which you, my good son, asked me about.

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

atyadbhutam idaṁ brahman dharmākhyānam anuttamam |  
sarva dharmā vidām śreṣṭha kathitaṁ munisattama || 51 ||

Yudhishtira replied:— "O most venerable Mārkaṇḍeya and best of *munis*, you have indeed related to me this most amazing and unique narrative.

sukhaśrāvyatayā vidvan muhūrta iva me gataḥ |  
na hi tṛptosmi bhagavañ śṛṇvāno dharmam uttamam || 52 ||

O learned one, listening to this story with wrapt attention, time has passed in an instant; but, O adorable sir, I am not as yet satiated with hearing your discourse on Dharma."

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<sup>26</sup> A form of Hindu etiquette at parting.

